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At the Feet of Jesus:

OR,

MEMORIALS OF SERVICE, LOVING THOUGH BRIEF.

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

SOPHIA DURY DENHAM,

WITH SELECTIONS FROM HER DIARY

AND LETTERS, ETC.

BY

BENJAMIN SMITH,

AUTHOR OF "VICE-ROYALTY;" "CLIMBING;" ETC.



"Mary sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word."—LUKE x. 39.

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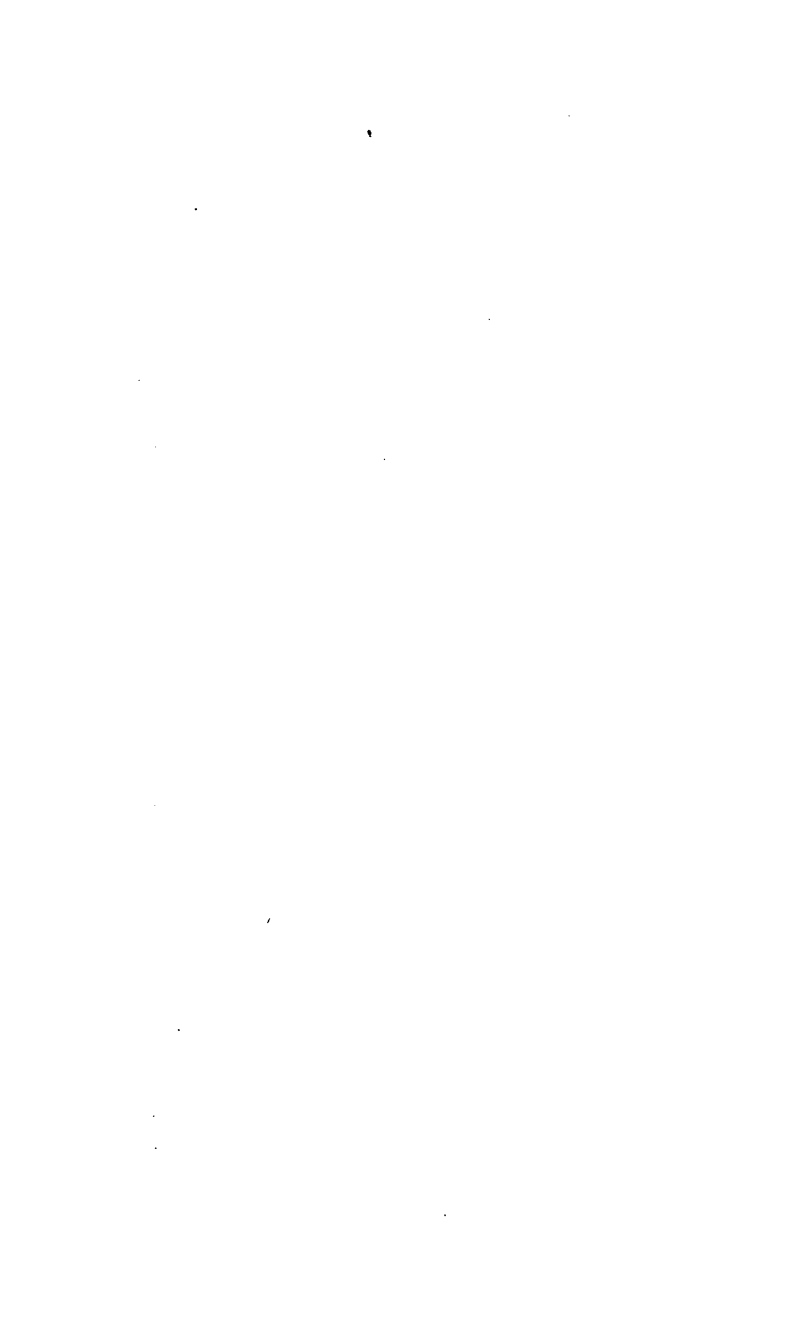
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INTRODUCTION.

THE private papers of a deceased friend can scarcely be examined without emotion. Those left by Sophia Denham were entrusted to me by those most closely allied to her, accompanied by an earnest request that I would employ them in preparing a brief memoir of her. They now lie before me. The penmanship of some is that of a little girl learning to write; and of others such as might be expected from one who was in the constant use of the pen. Some of the writing is in pencil, and has evidently been written in haste, when other duties were pressing; whilst other portions have been penned at leisure. Here are records of her conflicts and victories; of her joys and sorrows; of her aspirations, and failures, and successes; of all that belonged to the life of God in her soul, and of that life as manifested in her daily conduct. Here are also letters, seeking counsel or imparting it; asking for sympathy or tendering it; letters concerning daily tasks or the struggle for eternal life: letters addressed to her earliest friends, or to those whose esteem and love she gained by her rectitude, and truthfulness, and affection. Here are papers written by the departed one under many and various circumstances. She has left us. Her spirit has entered the unseen world.

She lives now among those mysteries so completely hidden from our senses. She shares, we doubt not, the blessedness prepared for all who overcome. She is yonder. We hear the voice no longer, nor see her features, nor hold any direct communion with her. But the words traced by her pen are still with us, and are henceforth invested with a degree of sacredness. We can scarcely look upon them without seriousness of feeling almost amounting to awe.

We are reminded that speedily all that appertains to us will be at the disposal of others. Our treasures, of smaller or of greater value, will no longer be under our control. They will be examined, and we shall not be so much as present to express any wish concerning them. They may, or may not, have been left in the condition we should have placed them had we known at the time that the arrangement would prove, so far as we are concerned, the final one. Soon we shall have closed the drawer, or box, or desk, wherein we have placed whatsoever seems to be ours peculiarly and beyond everything else, and it will be ours no longer. To arrange the contents of the drawer, or box, or desk, does not appear a difficult task, yet we shall never more perform it. Some other hand than ours will do so, when it is done, and some other eye than ours will next rest upon what we have placed therein, and another mind will be impressed, somehow, by what is found therein. Perhaps most of us shrink, more or less, from this scrutiny of our stores. It does seem as though they ought always to belong to us, and that we would rather they were not turned over and examined by any one, however dear. Such examination appears a sort of intrusion. Perhaps we feel this,

when we happen to consider the subject, in nothing more than in reference to the papers we regard as private. We turn over with reverent hand those belonging to the sainted dead. Her hand will not be laid again on those papers to assert her ownership, and her voice will not be raised to protest against any use we make of them. But we would not employ them as she would not wish them to be employed. We forget not how soon some one must use similar discretion concerning any trace of our doings.

Miss D. expressed no wish concerning her papers. It is probable that the thought of their being used in the compilation of a memoir never occurred to her. Yet her friends have reason to know what would have been her judgment, if convinced that good was likely to be done, by making any portion of them known. During several years of her brief life she earnestly sought the glory of her Saviour, and especially in the early conversion and godly life of the youthful around her. She was not accustomed to consult her own feelings when there was the opportunity of commending the Lord Jesus to a youthful mind. The responsibility of selection, and of connecting narrative, must rest of course with the writer. But the friends of Miss D. are not embarrassed by any misgiving concerning the views which would have been taken by her, had she been consulted. She would doubtless have said, "Let Christ be magnified, whether it be by the records of my short sojourn on earth being entirely and at once committed to the flame, or by some portion of them being put into a permanent form and rendered accessible to the public." In the judgment of several, Christ will be magnified by some memorial

possibility of this, Mr. Parson Greenwood, (well known in the North of England) replied, 'This cannot be impossible: I have had the proof of it in my own family. Nay, of more than this. I had six children by my former wife; and she suffered none of them to cry aloud after they were ten months old. And yet none of their spirits were so broken, as to unfit them for any of the offices of life.'” Some may be disposed to think that, perhaps, the induction of facts scarcely sustained the wide generalization of Mr. Wesley and his helper. Yet we cannot but think that the home of the early Methodist Preacher must have been a happy as well as quiet dwelling. Those who most grievously err in the training of their own children would prefer to spend a leisure hour at the fireside of a friend who had a wife like Mrs. Parson Greenwood to spending it at a fireside around which the training resembled that allowed by themselves. Thanks to the veteran for his lesson. The holy stillness of his home no doubt solaced him when “the six weeks’ round” had been accomplished. Reflection thereupon does us good. We cannot fully trace the benefit of such godly discipline. But we are certainly now thinking of the Christian life of his granddaughter’s granddaughter.

During the early part of the present century Parson Greenwood was a connecting link between the Methodism of early times, and of modern days. There are some in Leeds who can remember the patriarchal man, and who still repeat some of the sayings uttered by him in the pulpit, and class-room, and elsewhere. Until a few months before his death, he was strengthened to declare the Truth as it is in Jesus. “At last Christmas Quarterly Meeting he rose up, and

leaning on the top of his staff, gave a most impressive and solemn charge to all present, and informed them that he believed it was the last quarterly meeting he should ever live to attend. A few weeks afterwards he sickened, and with calmness and composure resigned his body to death, and his spirit into the hands of him who gave it."

Parson Greenwood had completed his eighty-third year when called to the rest of the glorified in heaven. His descendant, whose footsteps we now strive to trace had only recently completed her twenty-first. To many who knew her it seemed as though she was just entering on a course of usefulness which would result in much glory being given to her Saviour, and in much advantage being conferred on those around her, especially the youthful. Several dear children were looking up to her as a spiritual adviser to whom they could speak more freely than to others of riper years. To us it seemed as though she could not well be spared. To the Lord it was apparent that she had better be summoned home. We know not the reason, yet bow submissively to the decree. "Clouds and darkness are round about him: Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." The removal of youthful disciples ought to teach survivors this lesson at least, to seek with all earnestness the accomplishment of our life-task. The Master gives to us no information concerning the termination of the night-watch, yet renders it possible for each of us to ensure perfect and abiding bliss. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will

come forth, and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants." May such blessedness be ours, as we doubt not it was the portion of Sophia Dury Denham.

Those who knew her best admire the grace of God which, in so short a space of time, could enrich a partaker of our fallen nature with so many excellencies, and these in so ripened a degree. They are encouraged to look up to the God of all grace, who enabled their sainted friend, during the brief period of earthly service allotted to her, to manifest so much of the mind of Christ, and accomplish so much good. Though her sojourn on earth was short it was not in vain. She was enabled, for herself, to lay hold on eternal life, and to assist in leading some others into the path by which they too may reach the heavenly city.

"It is not growing like a tree,
In bulk, doth make man better be ;
Or standing long, an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere :
A lily of a day
Is fairer far in May,
Although it fall and die that night,—
It was the plant and flower of light.
In small proportions we just beauties see,
And in short measures life may perfect be."

The title given to this volume was selected because it was regarded as exceedingly expressive of the character of the departed one. She, from the period of her early conversion, endeavoured to imitate the conduct of Mary of Bethany. Her great desire was to be a *real disciple of Jesus*. She daily strove to understand

the will of her gracious Master, that she might do it. The Saviour placed before the docile and attentive pupil one lesson after another. All was not learned at once, but the disciple was constantly learning. Much sooner than we expected she was called to the glorious home. She beholds the glory of her Lord, and shares his joy. She is, for ever, in yon bright abode, "at the feet of Jesus." "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

CHAPTER I.

LED TOWARDS JESUS.

“O let the little ones come to Me,
In all their love and simplicity ;
I will let them lean on my gentle breast,
Will smile upon them, and make them blest ;
And I will shew them my saving grace ;
O let them come to my kind embrace.”

SOPHIA DURY DENHAM was born at Banwell in Somerset, January 5th, 1845. In her infancy she manifested an intensity of feeling and a strength of will that caused her parents much concern and contrasted strongly with the gentleness and teachableness displayed in her subsequent career. In very early life she was found seated, as a disciple, at the feet of Jesus ; and, in early womanhood passed away from our midst to be for ever seated at the Redeemer's feet, among the glorified in heaven. Our first task is to trace how she was led, in the morning of life to make the good choice which has been ratified for ever.

The blessed Spirit of God chiefly employed the favourable influences of a godly home in Sophia's early conversion. In speaking of the home of Sophia's childhood, we mean the dwelling occupied by her *pious parents, wherever that might be, and however, frequently changed.* Some, when thinking of the

happy home where they dwelt when they yielded their youthful hearts to Jesus, recall rooms and places which become exceedingly familiar because the whole of childhood and youth were spent there, and exceedingly sacred because the blessings of many years were received there. They, with those most loved, continued to gather around the same hearth and board, until they had to go forth into the world to fulfil their part in its tasks. In the same spot where their father sat to read God's Holy Word to his household when they were infants, he statedly did so when they were far advanced in their teens. To the same chamber whither their mother retired to plead for her children when babes she still resorted for the same purpose when the snares of advanced youth were near their path. In the sanctuary where the children were solemnly dedicated to God, and where their souls yielded to the entreaties of Christ by his servants, they sought strength for the conflicts of early manhood or of early womanhood. Very familiar and very sacred are those places felt to be where the pilgrim warrior of Christ first learned how to enter the path to the kingdom, and first girded on the armour of light by which he was to overcome.

We must not, however, regard Sophia's home as having those local associations. Her father, the Rev. Thomas Denham, was a Wesleyan Minister. His home was more like Abraham's tent, than the house which Solomon built for himself. Though the tent was not removed quite so frequently as in the days of the Methodist fathers, it was never allowed to abide in one place for many years. When Sophia was born, *her father's home had been, for nearly half-a-year, at*

Banwell. Previous to the Conference of 1844, it had been at Neath in the Swansea Circuit. When Sophia was two years and a half old, that home was at Watlington in Oxfordshire; and was changed, as to locality, from time to time, to the close of Sophia's life. But, though local associations were thus somewhat interfered with, there was still a godly home, and its numberless advantages. So far as friendships are concerned, beyond the limits of the family, the children of a Methodist preacher, like their parents, resemble flowers and trees often transplanted. The poor roots and fibres are perplexed and weary, and struggle on in an uncomfortable manner. But, in the all important matter of love to the Saviour, Sophia had no such disadvantage. She had, in the gracious arrangements of Providence, been planted in a right soil, and was, everywhere, as a tender plant, cared for by the Divine Husbandman.

Sophia derived many advantages from being the child of a faithful minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who dwell in the home of a Christian Pastor lead no charmed life so as to escape either the vexations or temptations which others painfully feel. Toil, and pain, and disappointment are experienced there, and the allurements of sense, and the fascinations of the world, and the suggestions of the arch-adversary, must be resisted there as elsewhere. But those are privileged whose earliest years are spent beneath the roof, and under the guidance, of one who is sincerely and earnestly endeavouring to approve himself to the Blessed Master and to induce others to enter his *service*. Those have reason for thankfulness who are
 morning and evening in order that

they may listen to Words from Heaven for the regulation of our life on earth, and that they may together bow around the altar of the household to present their united sacrifice of prayer and praise to the God of families. Those ought to be grateful to whom the service of Christ is commended by the lips and lives of godly parents, and to whom the way of life is thus made plain before their feet have been entangled amid the snares of evil. The advantages enjoyed by all Christian families are, perhaps, somewhat enlarged in the case of those beneath the immediate care of a godly minister. Such privileges were conferred on the subject of this memoir.

Sophia's mother was well qualified to guide her children to the Saviour, and sought with earnest and loving solicitude to do so. Mrs. Denham endeavoured to the utmost of her power to help her husband in his work of saving souls. The department of sacred service which she was specially adapted for, and to which she largely devoted herself, was that of the instruction of the young. Her kindly heart led her to seek their confidence that she might do them good, and also enabled her to gain that confidence. She delighted to gather around her a few children that she might speak to them of the Saviour's love and endeavour to win their hearts for Christ. During her girlhood she had been graciously employed by the Holy Spirit in leading her own grandmother to the Saviour. The conversion of that aged woman was a remarkable instance of the power of a consistent life and loving words of truth when used by the Holy Ghost. The grandmother's name was Weaver. She had a daughter named Catherine who was brought to

God in early life, and of whom we may have more to say hereafter. Catherine had the holy delight of seeing her father submit to the grace of God, as we shall have to narrate. He was saved from his sins and taken to heaven. But the widow remained far from God. Though mourning her loss, her worldliness and self-righteousness remained. Her daughter Catherine soon after her father's death, when about to relinquish her situation as a governess, agreed with a pious servant maid to retire, if possible, every day at noon, to spend some time in secret pleading with God, for the conversion of their mothers. In forming this arrangement they had special reference to the Saviour's declaration, "I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. xviii. 19.) Six months after this agreement was entered into, the pious maid-servant was gladdened by the conversion of her mother. That mother was to be, in the order of God's providence, speedily removed to the unseen world. The Lord, in mercy, answered without delay, the blended cry of those youthful suppliants. Catherine's mother remained unsaved, and apparently unimpressed, when thirty years had passed away since her case was thus brought before the mercy seat. The removal of her husband, the respectful and loving entreaties of her child, the powerful influences of the Holy Ghost, which were doubtless given in answer to united prayer, and her own approach to the verge of the eternal world, left her, seemingly, unconcerned respecting the future, or entirely self-satisfied. Catherine, a girl at home when *she began to plead for her unsaved mother*, had long

been surrounded by the cares of a family. When old Mrs. Weaver was laid helpless on a sick-bed, from which it was not likely she would ever rise, Catherine's daughter Mary Ann was appointed as her special nurse. That youthful nurse (afterwards to be the mother of Sophia Denham,) had already begun to love the Saviour, and was happy in the manifestation of his favour. Constantly in the room with her aged and suffering grandmother, she devoted herself to do all the good she possibly could. Her unwearied attention to the countless and ceaseless wants of the invalid naturally won her affection. The words she occasionally uttered fell as dew on the thirsty and hardened soil. Much good seed had been placed there during the thirty years past. Constant prayer had been offered on her behalf, and was still offered, by the aged woman's own child. But to the little girl was reserved the honour of being the immediate instrument, in the hand of God, of leading that aged woman to the Friend of Sinners.

Light gradually found an entrance into that soul which had so persistently remained in culpable darkness. At length the sincere and heartfelt cry for more light went up from Mrs. Weaver's lips. The anxious inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" was elicited from her who, during these many years of her life, had not known that she needed salvation, and would not be taught. Seventy years had she sat in darkness; and during the last thirty, amid the brightness of the gospel day. But the True Light at length gave her to see her need of the Saviour, and the way to that Saviour, and the blessedness of those who have reached his feet.

She who was thus early honoured by being made the instrument in her grandmother's salvation, eagerly embraced the various opportunities of Christian usefulness which successively presented themselves. As the wife of a Wesleyan Minister these were many, especially among the young. Mrs. D. spared no pains in her endeavours to allure them to the Cross of Jesus. Her reading was made subservient to this purpose. Whilst searching for food for her own mind and heart, she was also intent upon finding something that would nourish good desires within the souls of the dear young folk. She would read to them that which she had carefully selected; and, if the verses, or narrative, or wise admonitions, were found in a volume which she could not retain, she took the trouble of copying them, that those for whom she cared might be benefited. In these days good books are so numerous and cheap that such a test of patient zeal may not often be applied. But there are those whose memories have been enriched by words of beauty and wisdom placed before them when memory was vigorous, by this painstaking of Sophia's mother. In many selections of hymns we can now read the hymn commencing:—

“ I think when I read that sweet story of old,
 When Jesus was here among men,
 How he called little children as lambs to his fold,
 I should like to have been with him then.
 I wish that his hands had been placed on my head,
 That his arm had been thrown around me,
 And that I might have seen his kind look when he said,
 ‘ Let the little ones come unto Me.’ ”

But some might never have learned those beautiful *verses*, during their childhood, had not Mrs. Denham's *en provided the needful copies*.

Whilst Sophia was in her fifth year the family removed to Stratford-on-Avon, as Mr. Denham was appointed by the Conference to that circuit. Mrs. D. entered upon her tasks in the new sphere of toil with great earnestness. She might have had some presentiment that her day of earthly service was not to be a very prolonged one. She did desire, whether it should prove lengthy or brief, that she should be approved by her Lord. She speedily succeeded in gathering around her a large number of young people in a Bible-class. Her instructions here were specially attractive, and were made of great service to several. Some whom she had taught to understand the Word of God more clearly than heretofore, and who had found pleasure as well as profit in attending her Bible-class, joined the church of Christ, and sought counsel and aid from Mrs. Denham in the Society-class of which she was leader. After the removal of their beloved leader and friend to the Church above, these young people erected a tablet to her memory in the chapel where they had so frequently worshipped together. During the months in which Mrs. Denham was thus toiling for the early salvation of the children belonging to other homes, her own were not neglected. They also were asked to yield their hearts to Jesus, and felt the attractive power of the Saviour's name when commended by a godly and loving mother. Mrs. Denham had the privilege of discerning that her children were listening to the Master's voice. After her removal from the Church militant, but before the period arrived when Mr. Denham must proceed to another Circuit, their eldest daughter obtained the pardoning mercy of God, and the assurance of the Holy Ghost to be

adoption into the Divine favour. This conscious salvation was given to the youthful daughter in the chapel where the sainted mother had so diligently laboured in her Master's cause. In that same house of prayer, Sophia, though yet a little child, pleaded with God that he would reveal to her his forgiving love. Would not the mother, though glorified, taste a higher bliss as she became acquainted with the work of grace in the hearts of her daughters? Ought we to be rebuked if we cherish the thought that she would be present in that earthly sanctuary as a ministering spirit, sent forth by the King of kings, and allowed to look upon youthful saints happy in the love of God, rejoicing over the children of their sainted friend, now entering, whilst little ones, into the service of their Lord?

We must, however, refer somewhat more distinctly to the death of Sophia's mother, as that event had an influence in the child's early decision for Christ. Whilst at Stratford-on-Avon, Mrs. Denham felt her strength to be rapidly failing. Perhaps, like many a Wesleyan Minister's wife, she had overtaken her powers. She had been wishful to attend fully to her household tasks, and friends, in other respects thoughtful and kind, are apt to regard their pastor's wife as always at leisure to attend to the affairs of others; and thus, without any evil intention, to lay burdens on a sensitive mind and feeble body, which cannot be borne without injury. Mrs. Denham had cheerfully done her utmost, for she loved her gracious Lord, and desired to be of service to the souls for whom Christ died. *But one post of sacred toil after another had to be relinquished.* At length the patient worker and suf-

ferer was constrained to admit the conviction that before long she must leave her husband and children. Her solicitude respecting these, and especially concerning Sophia, was very great. She had observed that Sophia was exceedingly sensitive and impulsive. She would, in consequence of this, have to experience much of sorrow, and would be exposed to many dangers. The loving mother would fain have screened her child from the tempest's power, and the thorny path, and the unkindly voice. But this she could not do. As the hour of her own departure to the land of everlasting purity and gladness approached, she longed with a mother's tenderness for the welfare of her child. She expressed an earnest desire, had it been consistent with the will of her Lord, to have taken Sophia with her to the happy home above. Thinking, however, that this would not be allowed, she affectionately and repeatedly advised her children to resort to the mercy-seat for help and comfort. She had been accustomed to take her children with her to her chamber, that they might together bow before God in prayer. The dying mother now entreated the elder sister to take Sophia and John to the throne of grace, that, when their mother had reached the heavenly city, they might daily obtain strength of soul to urge their way thither. She told them how, when she was seven years old, the Lord had claimed her heart, and had imparted a gracious assurance of his forgiving love; and how, since then, he had proved himself to be an unfailing friend. The nearer that loving mother drew to the river's brink, where she must part with her much-loved children, the more earnest was her desire that they *should, as children, yield themselves without reserve to her covenant-keeping God.*

At length the hour of her departure arrived. With happy anticipations of the rest and joy upon which she was about immediately to enter, and of being one day re-united in heaven to those she had loved on earth, her sanctified spirit entered the presence of her Lord, on June 3, 1851.

“My mother ! when I learn’d that thou wast dead,
 Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed ?
 I heard the bell toll’d on thy burial day,
 I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,
 And, turning from my nursery window, drew
 A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu !
 But was it such ?—It was !—Where thou art gone,
 Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.
 May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,
 The parting words shall pass my lips no more.”

The wish thus expressed by William Cowper was often and deeply felt by Sophia D. Frequently, as childhood merged into youth, and youth ripened into womanhood, did she pray that she might be so guided, and saved, and strengthened, that at length (sooner or later, as might please God) she might be re-united to her sainted mother in the glorious home to which the parent had already gone. That earnest and devout wish has been realized, sooner than we thought it would be, and far sooner than we should have appointed had we, with our shortsightedness and self-love, been allowed to determine. We bow submissively to the divine and all-wise decree, and endeavour to trace the footsteps of the sainted one, so as to obtain help in our own pilgrimage.

Some may read this sketch of Sophia Dury Denham’s *brief life, whilst they themselves are sheltered in the peaceful home of godly parents.* The sorrowful day

of a parent's funeral may not yet have occurred in your history, and may, possibly, be long postponed. If you have been privileged to spend your earliest years in such favourable circumstances, and are still permitted to enjoy those inestimable advantages, let your gratitude to God be manifest in the wise and suitable employment of the blessings thus conferred. You have been brought to the Saviour, and have been, on countless occasions, commended to his care and love. He welcomes you among his disciples. He desires that you should be seated among his loved ones, learning the lessons of his grace, until you are called to take your places near his throne in glory. With glad and thankful hearts look up to him, saying, "Speak, for thy servant heareth." So will you, as life advances, discern more distinctly the privilege conferred on you in thus being gently led towards the All-Wise and All-Gracious Teacher. With hearts both glad and thankful, you will enter into the spirit of the words :—

“ With thanks I rejoice In thy fatherly choice
Of my state and condition below ;
If of parents I came Who honoured thy name,
’Twas thy wisdom appointed it so.

I sing of thy grace, From my earliest days,
Ever near to allure and defend ;
Hitherto thou hast been My preserver from sin,
And I trust thou wilt save to the end.”

CHAPTER II.

THE SAVIOUR FOUND.

“ O thou who mak'st the sun to rise,
Beam on my soul, illumine mine eyes,
And guide me through this world of care ;
The wandering atom Thou can'st see,
The falling sparrow's marked by Thee,
Then, turning mercy's ear to me,
Listen ! Listen !
Listen to an infant's prayer.”

THE removal of her much-loved mother led Sophia to be more in earnest concerning personal religion. The dear child was taught to feel the importance of being prepared to rejoin her mother in the realms of purity and bliss. Her heart's desire was that the God of her parents would be her God. She now longed for the filial confidence, and the loving heart, appertaining to God's children, and endeavoured, daily, to do that which she believed to be pleasing in the sight of God. When she had completed her seventh year she became very anxious lest she should arrive at her eighth birthday, without having made a complete consecration of herself to her Saviour, or receiving from him a satisfactory assurance of his acceptance of her. Sophia remembered how her sainted mother had been *thus led by the Spirit* to the Saviour when she was but *seven, and she* longed for such increase of Divine

light and power as would enable her, without delay, to close in with the offers of mercy, and claim the salvation of the Gospel for her own.

Greater intensity was given to the dear child's desire for salvation by the circumstance that her sister (a little older than herself,) had sought and found the blessing. Sophia had, therefore, as her much-loved companion, one who had gained the pearl of great price, and was earnestly watching and striving to retain that pearl, and was daily manifesting how highly she prized it. In constant and affectionate intercourse with one who had been thus enriched by her heavenly Benefactor, and encouraged by her to seek it, Sophia's desires were sustained and quickened. Sisterly love and fellowship were sanctified to the holiest and noblest purposes. It was as though the shining and priceless pearl was constantly held before the eyes of the little girl in the hand of a sister, and commended by the kindly tones and bright smiles of that sister.

Sophia's aunt, who had long been a member of the family, and for a time directed the affairs of the household, was happily one like minded with the departed one, and to the children endeavoured to supply, as far as possible, the place of their mother. She watched with deep interest, the work of grace proceeding in the souls so solemnly committed to her charge, and sought in all possible ways to strengthen that which was good, and to lead the children to conquer that which was evil. The difficulties which, more or less, all experience in approaching the Saviour, must be overcome in Sophia's case, and Miss Arnett endeavoured to help the youthful inquirer to accomplish this. It may seem to the mature believer, happy in the smile of

his God, an easy and pleasant task to confide in the Atonement of Calvary. There is such an infinite fullness of merit, and such a perfect adaptation to our case, and such a divine manifestation of good will towards us, as make it easy to receive at once what is so freely offered. Why should we not do so? And, as we thus honour the great work of our Redeemer, God honours our faith, and sends down the Comforter into our humbled and believing souls. Many have found it thus easy to trust in the great Sacrifice of Calvary. But even such can recollect the time when it was not thus easy, and such are very ready to sympathize with, and help to the utmost of their power, those who are groping their way amid much gloom to the light streaming from the mercy-seat. Happy are those contrite ones who, in the time of their sorrow and perplexity, have a friend such as Sophia found in her aunt.

Still the dear child did not at once find the blessing she so greatly desired. The Father's voice was heard and followed, but only indistinctly understood. The Father's hand was already sustaining and leading the youthful pilgrim, but was not distinctly perceived. The Father's heart was full of tenderness and love towards this contrite one, yet that parental affection was but partially disclosed. Stronger desires for the Father's smile were to be called forth and manifested. The child was to learn more fully the need of divine grace to renew the heart and regulate its desires, and also the insufficiency of earthly things to make the soul happy without the manifestation of our heavenly Father's love. Meanwhile the Lord cared for the *youthful suppliant*, and gave her, in the person of her

father's second wife, an experienced and earnest helper, under whose fostering influence her desires for salvation increased. She now willingly accompanied her sister to her chamber to pray, at those seasons rendered sacred by the practice and counsel of their sainted mother. Doubtless that mother was permitted to know that her children, Mary, Sophia, and John, thus fulfilled her injunctions and sought to tread in her steps, and were being aided so to do by the dear friend whom she herself had suggested as her successor. Within the heart of Sophia the cry, "Shew us the Father," waxed louder and louder. She would, at this time, gently tap at the chamber door of those she knew to be interested in her spiritual welfare, and ask them to pray with her and for her; and, especially that before she reached the eighth anniversary of her birth she might be enabled to rejoice in the pardoning love and renewing grace of God.

Though often greatly discouraged, and ready to think that her prayers were disregarded, Sophia had been led nearer and nearer to her Saviour. The happy moment was nigh when to her would be entrusted the pearl of great price. The mists which had interposed between her soul and the cross were to be suddenly dispersed, and her heart was to be made joyful in the manifested favour of God. Still groping amid gloom, and tempted to regard the darkness and perplexity as augmenting, the dear child had been led by the good Spirit to the verge of light. The way of faith was to be revealed to her soul in an instant by a ray of light from heaven falling suddenly on the instructions given for many months by godly friends. Mrs. Denham had been endeavouring to place once more before the bewildered,

yet earnest, mind of the child, how she should at that moment repose the trust of her whole heart on the merits of Jesus alone. The Holy Ghost blessed the word spoken. Light was given. The heart of the child thankfully closed in with the gracious offer, received Jesus as her present Saviour, and was made glad in the salvation of God. They knelt before the Lord. But the language of sorrowful entreaty and humbled self-abasement was not natural to that hour. They knelt to pray; but found themselves praising a sin-pardoning God. "And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." When Sophia rose from her knees, she said: "O mamma, I am so happy. I *do* feel my sins forgiven. I was never so happy before." The little girl hastened down stairs to inform her aunt and her sister of what the Lord had done for her soul. Such was the sweetness, and simplicity, and gladness of this first testimony from Sophia's lips to the blessedness of religion, that those who listened were affected to tears. All felt that God was among them of a truth, and that their family was, more than ever, like that at Bethany, which used to be so highly favoured by the presence and smile of the Lord Jesus. Sophia's father was, however, still unacquainted with the happy circumstance. He was from home, engaged in his sacred toils, endeavouring to commend the fine gold of the kingdom to others, and thus to enrich them; yet unconscious how greatly the Lord had added to the stores of his own wealth, in the salvation of his dear *child*. Some insight may perhaps be gained concerning *the religion of childhood* by a thoughtful consideration

of what might appear strange and anomalous in Sophia's conduct on this occasion. Before Mr. Denham's arrival she thought of him and said, "I was never so happy in my life, but please do not tell papa." Sophia tenderly loved her father, and highly esteemed him, and knew that her newly found joy would be to him as much as to any other friend, perhaps more than to any other, an occasion of delight, yet requested that he might not be told. How powerful the timidity of youthful disciples in disclosing their sacred enjoyments to those whom they chiefly admire and love. When, however, at length Mr. Denham's step was heard, Sophia could not restrain her holy gladness. She could not wait until her father had taken his accustomed place at the fireside. As he opened the door, most likely burdened with many cares and disappointments connected with his work, he was met by his little daughter, who communicated the joyful surprise. God had taken away her sin. That was an evening, around the family altar and hearth, never to be forgotten by those interested therein. The recollection of that great joy is still cherished by those then present who still remain on earth, and has not been put away by those who have tasted the unutterable delights of heaven.

The eighth anniversary of Sophia's birth was at hand, but it had not arrived. She had long desired and earnestly prayed that before she completed her eighth year she might have sufficient reason to believe that she had passed from death unto life. Though she had often been tempted to think that her prayers, because of her unworthiness, were disregarded, such had not been the case. Her heavenly Father had *graciously* listened to them all, and had led the infant

suppliant along a right path. Those supplications, presented in the Name of Jesus, were now to receive a blessed answer. Sophia's birthday was to be kept in the family with a holy joy exceeding any previous anniversary. The Sabbath morning dawned whilst Sophia's heart was depressed because of her sinfulness, though striving to hope in God's mercy. Wednesday, the Wednesday of the very week ushered in by that Sabbath, was the eighth anniversary of Sophia's entrance into the world. That Sabbath, however, was not allowed to close until, as we have narrated, the dear child had entered into the rest which Jesus has on earth provided for all penitent believers.

We gain a more distinct view of that week as spent by Sophia, and also a glimpse of sisterly affection, by reading a brief record made at the time by her sister, then in her twelfth year.

"January 2, 1852. Sunday.—This day has been one of unspeakable pleasure. Except at the time of my own conversion I never experienced such joy as I did this day when my dear sister came running into the room shouting, 'I am so happy. My sins are forgiven. I am sure they are.' Lord help me to lead her inexperienced feet in the way to Zion; and do thou, Lord, grant that we may be helpful to each other. I do rejoice that the event, so long prayed for has arrived."

"January 5, 1852.—Sophia's birthday. We had Miss Warner at our home, and have been trying to win her to Christ. May the Lord bless our efforts, and help us to set an example worthy of imitation."

The eighth birthday was thus spent in the enjoyment of God's smile, and in an endeavour to lead a

youthful associate to the gracious Saviour. Sophia and her sister were but babes in Christ. They were exceedingly inexperienced and needed much instruction, and comfort, and support. But they had placed themselves at the feet of him who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Those were happy days which were subsequently spent in Eastington. Yet we have no desire to convey the impression that Sophia's experience was like a path marked by perpetual sunshine. Her temperament was both impulsive and sensitive. Hence she had frequent seasons of depression and conflict. She succeeded in retaining a sense of the Divine favour, but this was effected by much prayer and earnest faith. Sophia had also need of much watchfulness to prevent herself being led astray by hasty feeling. In this warfare she found great advantage from having being led so early to perceive the value of secret prayer, and to form the habit. Instead of parleying with the foe, or yielding to his power, Sophia, whilst thus a child, was accustomed to hasten to the mercy seat. She would retire to her own little room, and there, on bended knee would plead for strength to have victory. Nor did she plead in vain. Most likely before long the assault was renewed, but the youthful conscript was gaining vigour and skill for the fight.

Whilst very young, and before the removal of the family from Eastington, Sophia had followed the example of her sister, and had commenced a record of her religious life. A short extract therefrom may give some insight into that life when a little more than *ten years old*.

“Sunday, April 29, 1855.—I feel that my heavenly Father is very merciful to me, and very kind; and I also feel that I am unworthy of the least of his mercies. I want to love him more than I do. I wish to be more like him than I am. I feel that I grow in grace very slowly. I want to become more like my Living Head in all things. Lord, help me so to do. I desire to set my companions at school a good example. I want to know more of the love of Christ, and to show it to others. May God enable me to live to his glory. Amen.”

The winter of 1855-56 was spent at Whiston, a village beautifully situated in the neighbourhood of Rotherham. Sophia was invited to spend some time with her maternal grandmother who lived at Whiston. The child felt the separation from her father's home to be a severe trial, but cheerfully acquiesced in what was thought by him to be the best arrangement. When she arrived at Whiston, Sophia set herself to walk closely with her God under the new circumstances in which she was placed. A few lines in a letter sent at this time to her father will show how she was getting on. “I feel that I have been trusting too much to my own strength. I have been sometimes ready to forget that the eye of God is ever upon me. I have, however, experienced much pleasure in reading the Book of God, and in prayer.” The child was at the feet of Jesus as a disciple. She had much to learn, but she was willing to be taught by the Blessed Master.

CHAPTER III.

GRANDMAMMA'S GIRLHOOD.

“ Christ leads me through no darker rooms
Than he went through before ;
He that into God's kingdom comes,
Must enter by his door.

Come, Lord, when grace has made me meet
Thy blessed face to see ;
For if thy work on earth be sweet,
What will thy glory be ?

My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim ;
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with him.”

DURING the months spent by Sophia at Whiston she became very familiar with the narrative of her grandmamma's girlhood. It was the winter season, and, therefore, there were long evenings during which the child could not ramble over the hills, through the fields, and along the lanes of that beautiful neighbourhood. Besides there was so much in the story of grandmother's early days that Sophia loved to hear that the child would have been content to remain in doors to listen thereto, even when all nature invited her to go abroad. Sophia greatly delighted to wander in the open air, and gather the flowers, and listen to the singing of birds and the music of the running

stream, and hold sweet communings with herself, or join in cheerful converse with any companion she was allowed to associate with. But amid all the pleasant occupations in which she engaged during that visit, perhaps listening to the statements of grandma respecting the days when she was a girl was the most pleasant of all. When her aged friend was quite at leisure, and Sophia was allowed to bring her stool and place it near to grandma's chair, and some further circumstances were made known, or explanations and details given, or that which had been thrice told was told again, the child was happy beyond measure. Doubtless the gracious Master was employing the lips of the aged disciple to convey heavenly wisdom to the mind and heart of the youthful one.

The venerable lady was listened to by Sophia as we may suppose one of the latest survivors of "The Pilgrim Fathers" would be listened to by his grandchildren when telling what he remembered concerning the voyage of the "May-Flower," the sore persecutions which preceded that voyage, or the terrible hardships and gracious deliverances experienced afterwards at and near Plymouth Rock. Who has not heard of brave doings, and fearless daring, and heroic endurance, until he has felt that, in some sphere or other of worthy kind, he also must do exploits? So did Sophia Denham listen to grandma's story.

We cannot hope that strangers will read a sketch of that girlhood with similar interest to that felt by Sophia when listening thereto. Many of the details which imparted a special charm to the narrative have been lost. Besides the reader cannot be placed in the *position once occupied* by the auditor. The reader is

not a little girl, seated on a favourite stool, beautifully worked; and listening to a dear, aged, loving grandmother. We cannot, by any effort, secure these advantages for the narrative, and it must therefore be only partly appreciated. The story, as furnished by the pen, will only be as an outline map; or a picture divested of the glowing colours which rendered it so attractive. But as you cannot have it as Sophia enjoyed it, you must make the best of it as here presented.

When the present century opened, there was living in the ancient city of York a man named Marmaduke Weaver. Concerning his trade, and his temporal prosperity, we have nothing at present to do. He was a person who, in those days, would, among many, pass as a sort of religious man. He had a place in one of the churches, which place he occupied on Sundays, if nothing he deemed important prevented him. He believed all the Thirty-nine Articles, so far as he was acquainted therewith and could comprehend them. Then in addition to this, he had much zeal of fiery sort against all innovators, or those he judged to be such. Having, in the city, a noble Cathedral, and about two dozen churches, and not more than thirty thousand people, all conventicles, meeting-houses, and chapels were to be regarded as needless, and held in utter abhorrence.

Nearly half-a-century had elapsed since the first recorded visit of the Rev. John Wesley. Under the date of Saturday, April 25, 1752, Mr. Wesley writes:—
 “Some of our company had dreadful forebodings of what was to be at York. A worthy Justice of the Peace (*doubtless to quiet the mob there*) had just

caused to be cried about the streets, stuck up in public places, and even thrown into many houses, part of the 'Comparison between the Papists and Methodists.' Perhaps this might be the occasion of some bitter curses which were given us, almost as soon as we entered the gates. But the vain words of those Rabshakehs, returned into their own bosoms. I began preaching at six. The chapel was filled with hearers, and with the presence of God. The opposers opened not their mouths. The mourners blessed God for the consolation."

During the fifty years following that visit, Methodism had taken a firm hold on the old city. It was beginning even to emerge into outward respectability. None of the beautiful Methodist chapels which now adorn the city had any existence, but some noble-hearted and liberal-minded men had begun to contemplate a wonderful effort, which eventually resulted in the erection of New Street Chapel, (though somewhat smaller and plainer than as it now exists). Methodism was evidently making progress. But it was regarded with suspicion by many, and with hatred by some. Marmaduke Weaver was found among the latter class. Perhaps the exclusiveness of the citizens in civic and commercial matters might extend itself injuriously into other subjects. At that time none but a citizen (one who had been born free, or earned his freedom, or bought it) must sell a coat or a hat, or a pair of shoes; must vend a pound of tea, a bag of flour, or a peck of apples. Hence the worthy citizens were worse fed and clothed than other people, and had their minds and hearts pinched up at the same time. *It is possible that* this might have augmented the

prejudice everywhere found against those who proclaimed and proved themselves "the friends of all : the enemies of none."

Marmaduke Weaver was married, and had a family to instruct and provide for. He was accustomed to boast that none belonging to him had ever been to a meeting-house, nor ever should. They should be as loyal to the Church established by Law, as to good King George himself. It is to be feared, however, that Mr. W. did not carefully inquire respecting the will of the Lord Jesus, nor cherish heart loyalty to our Divine King. Desiring that his children should be fitted to make some figure in the world Mr. W. sent them to a dancing school; and wishful that they should share such amusements as he relished himself, he took them with him to the theatre. The mistaken and worldly father does not seem ever to have pondered how far such conduct was consistent with the obligations acknowledged in Baptism and Confirmation, which rites he would not have omitted on any consideration whatever. Having, in outward show, presented his children to Christ, and taught them in early life, publicly to ratify his deed, they were, thenceforth really, and daily, devoted to the service of the world in its sinful lusts and pleasures.

One of Mr. Weaver's daughters, Catherine, whilst at the theatre one evening, having been taken thither by her friends, was so fully and painfully convinced of the sinfulness of the amusement, that she resolved if God spared her to reach her home, she would never enter a theatre again. It is well known that in the performances of the stage there is much to shock the moral sensibilities. All persons whose minds are

virtuous, and who have any reverence for the Great Being who created and sustains us, must often be shocked by what they see and hear. A drama might be composed containing neither profanity nor impurity, but such productions have never been popular with the play-going multitude. We cannot doubt that the Holy Spirit was the gracious agent who reproved the child then yielding to be led into the sins of her parent. Most likely the Divine Instructor thus mercifully reproved by shedding light on some evil repugnant to the moral sense of the child. It was as when the lightning flash discloses to the previously unconcerned night-traveller a dreadful abyss yawning at his very feet. The child discerned what, perhaps, no human voice had ever declared in her hearing, that the bewitching sights and sounds of the theatre were alike opposed to true virtue and the will of God. She so pleaded with her father that, unbending as Marmaduke Weaver was in most matters, he at length consented that his daughter should be allowed to remain at home when other members of the family went to witness theatrical performances. The child made another effort, under the guidance of the Blessed Spirit of whom she knew as yet so little, and was again successful. Her father, doubtless to the surprise of all who were acquainted with his rugged and unyielding disposition, consented that the girl should be permitted to cease attending the dancing school. By "the drawings of the Father," but partially understood, the child was being led from the midst of grievous perils into the narrow way to the kingdom.

Soon after this, when Catherine was about twelve or

thirteen years old she went on a visit to her maternal grandmother, whose name was Mrs. Brabbs. The old lady lived in a very retired spot, far from the bustle of manufacturing or commercial life. Perhaps it would not be easy to find a village much more shut out from the noise of the great world than Laytham. But Methodism had found its way to Laytham. The gracious Saviour had, in that quiet village, manifested his power to save, and had a few disciples who, partaking of his grace, were striving to live to his glory. Persecution also had reached this sequestered spot. The principal landowner had threatened his tenantry with immediate ejectment if they dared to open their houses for preaching or prayer. Mr. Brabbs had not yielded his own heart to the Saviour, but he highly prized his good wife, and had a strong respect for civil and religious freedom. He therefore opened his house for the religious services of the Methodists, had it duly licensed for worship, and thus provided a place of refuge for the Ark of God. Mrs. Brabbs was aged, and ill, and not expected to recover when her granddaughter was sent to Laytham to see her.

During the child's visit to Laytham the Superintendent Minister of the Howden Circuit paid his quarterly visit to Laytham. He was no ordinary man. The Rev. Joseph Sutcliffe was greatly owned by his Master. His life as a Methodist preacher was prolonged to an unusual length. He commenced to travel in 1786, five years before the removal of Mr. Wesley to heaven, and was spared until 1856, a period of seventy years. He had lived ninety-four years on earth, when God took him to the better world. In

1801 he was appointed to the Howden Circuit with the Rev. Robert Newton as his colleague. These two eminent servants of Christ were permitted to see considerable prosperity and enlargement of the work of God during the two years they spent together in that Circuit. On the occasion just referred to, Mr. Sutcliffe preached, then met the Society for the renewal of their Quarterly Tickets, and then sought to give suitable advice, and administer comfort to the aged disciple in whose dwelling he had been preaching the words of life. The little girl did not escape the minister's attention, and was not forgotten when he knelt in prayer on behalf of the grandmother. Mr. Sutcliffe fervently prayed that as it appeared the Lord's will that the grandmother should soon be admitted to the ranks of the Church Triumphant, the granddaughter might take the vacant place in the Church Militant. The little girl was greatly affected. She had been, for some time, endeavouring to do the will of God. That will was now being more fully disclosed to her. She resolved, as Mr. Sutcliffe pleaded on her behalf, that, whatever the cost, she would serve the Lord.

Her grandmother sought to strengthen the good desires and purposes of the child. She, however, specially directed her to seek the assured pardon of sin and the conscious renewal of heart by the grace of God. Perhaps the dying saint was afraid that if the youthful inquirer obtained a place among the people of God, previous to her obtaining salvation, she might be led to rest satisfied without the indispensable blessing. Of course it is quite possible to substitute *membership* for conversion, and such an error *rove fatal*. Perhaps the aged disciple, knowing

the character of the home to which Catherine must soon return, and anticipating the stern and painful ordeal through which she must pass if she became a professor of religion, and believing that nothing except the joy of salvation could then sustain the child, deemed it advisable to defer the profession of discipleship until the lesson of penitent trust in the atonement had been learned. Whatever were her reasons, the dying saint urged her granddaughter not to join the Society until she had found peace with God, but to spare no effort to gain the blessing.

Catherine Weaver returned to the home of her father very sorrowful and much perplexed. Her sins had been disclosed to her, but Christ was not yet revealed within her heart. Being resolved to become a disciple of Christ she had reason to fear that she would have to endure persecution from those she dearly loved, and she had not yet any Divine consolation to sustain her in the prospect of the fiery trial. She was but a child, and of course inexperienced, yet must decide for herself the path in which she ought to walk. Thus much seemed clear to her that she must at all risks hear the Gospel preached, and unite in prayer with those who called upon the name of the Lord. The profession of discipleship she would postpone, according to the advice of her now sainted grandmother, until she had found peace with God.

The first evening after her return from Laytham there was preaching in the Methodist chapel. Catherine went to the service. As she returned home in time for supper no question was asked, and no suspicion was aroused. This was repeated several times, though she *knew*, of course, that concealment could not be of

long duration. The disclosure speedily took place. One evening Catherine returned home a little later than usual. Her father inquired whither she had been. She used no equivocation, but at once replied that she had been to the Methodist chapel. Such an answer had not been anticipated. Mr. Weaver could scarcely believe that he heard such an avowal from a daughter of his. His anger exceeded all that his daughter had feared. He was a bigoted and self-willed man : yet surely the Adversary of souls was within that unrenowned heart, fanning the unholy fire, and driving the bond-slave to unnatural phrenzy. Furious passion raged within the poor soul of the worldly yet self-righteous man. Pride was deeply mortified. All his acquaintances had heard the oft-repeated boast that neither he, nor any one belonging to him, had ever disgraced themselves by entering a meeting-house, nor ever would do anything so discreditable. Yet his daughter had so demeaned herself and brought shame upon the household. Mr. Weaver lost all self-control as he thus viewed himself as a dishonoured man, and the daughter he had loved and cherished was the occasion of the mischief. In his rage he seized the plate near him on the supper table, and flung it violently at the object of his resentment, at the same time ordering her to leave his presence that moment. Reproaches and threats were addressed to the girl, by her father, on the following days. Care was also taken that she should not be allowed to go to the evening preaching, and Marmaduke Weaver trusted that the disgrace done to his family by Methodism would be wiped away. *Orthodoxy, without godliness, must suffice for his children as it had done for himself.*

Catherine, however, still thirsted for the salvation of God. She knew that it was her duty to obey her parents in all things consistent with the will of God. Her own inclinations she was willing to yield at their bidding as she would not have done when careless respecting the favour of God. But she must not disobey the Lord, nor trifle with her precious soul. She was perplexed. But she thought, and read her Bible, and prayed, and then deemed it right that she should attend the early morning service when opportunity served, that she might learn the way to the Saviour. As often as practicable the youthful inquirer, whilst her father and the other members of the family were still asleep, arose and went to hear words whereby she might be saved. A young lady who noticed her attendance, and devout demeanour, invited her to the class led by a good man named Mr. Pollard. This offer was, for the time, declined. Catherine's new friend, appointed a place where they two should meet for religious conversation, with especial reference to the case of the sorrowful inquirer. Catherine thankfully assented. She then hastened home, and, without partaking of breakfast, went to her own room to urge the plea for mercy, so frequently and earnestly presented aforetime. She opened her bible to ask counsel, once more, of Almighty God. The passage of Scripture to which she turned was the second chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. Her eye rested on the eighth verse. She read it, and paused. Light from heaven, the spiritual illumination of the Holy Ghost, was streaming on the words. "By grace are ye saved through faith : and that not of yourselves : it is the *gift of God.*" These were not unknown words. But

they were applied to her soul with a power before unfelt by her. The declaration was not new, and not new to her, but it appeared in a new aspect, and was made the medium by which a new life was conveyed to her soul. Salvation had come :—The peace, and love, and power of which the preacher had spoken in the house of her grandmother at Bursea, and which she had seen exemplified in the life of that aged saint, now glorified. The Holy Spirit had enabled the mourner to cast herself in penitent faith on the Great Atonement, and she was saved by grace. She now shared the blessedness described by the apostle Paul, “Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear ; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”—(Rom. viii. 15, 16.)

At the earliest opportunity Catherine sought the young lady who had so kindly sought to help her. She told her what the Lord had done for her soul, and they rejoiced together. The new convert in the ardour of her first love, longed to testify to the goodness of her Lord, and questioned not for one moment the propriety or safety of joining the Methodists. To the first class-meeting held after her conversion, Catherine accompanied her friend. With great simplicity, and a heart overflowing with love, and joy, and gratitude, she narrated her experience, and declared when, and where, and how, her gracious Saviour had turned her darkness into day. She wanted all who loved Jesus to join her in magnifying the mercy of *God in snatching her soul as a brand from the burning ; and she longed that all unhappy sinners might find*

their way to Jesus, that they might taste his mercy, and learn to love him with all their hearts.

All present were deeply affected as they listened to this testimony on behalf of their Lord; and united to praise him for his goodness. The leader, however, hesitated to write down Catherine's name in the class-book. The sternness and bigotry of Marmaduke Weaver were well known. The good leader feared lest this dear girl should find the sufferings she would be called to endure more than she could bear; and judged that, on the whole, she would be justified in postponing her profession of religion. Catherine had, however, fully counted the cost. She had frequently vowed, that if the Lord would extend mercy to her, and make her happy in his love, she would shrink from no cross, and would be Christ's faithful disciple in profession and reality. Her father would, doubtless, be grieved. But, perhaps by meek submission to his will in all things consistent with the welfare of her soul, and a patient fidelity to Christ, she might lead him and others dear to her to think of their own need of salvation. Her resolve was taken, and firmly announced. The name of Catherine Weaver was enrolled among the disciples who were despised and hated by her father.

The disclosure of this decided step did not take place at once. An interval of a few weeks was allowed. During that time Catherine had the opportunity of manifesting the power of religion, and of showing how, having been made happy in the love of Jesus, she was better prepared for the duties as daughter and sister. The youthful disciple also had the opportunity of *anticipating* the probabilities of her future lot with a

soul no longer burdened by guilt and fear, and of seeking additional strength at the throne of grace to which she now had boldness of approach through the blood of Christ.

The light, kindled by a Divine hand, could not, however, be permanently hidden. One Sunday, not many weeks after Catherine's entrance into the liberty of God's dear children, a customer came to her father's house desiring to make some purchase. Marmaduke Weaver's shop was closed. Thus far he paid respect to religion. But his orthodoxy and zeal did not lead him to lose any opportunity of securing worldly gain. He at once directed Catherine to enter the shop and bring that which the customer wanted. She declined to do so, saying, "Father, God has extended his mercy to me. If I do what you require I shall grieve him, and lose his favour. Do excuse me." Mr. Weaver's conduct, when thus again mortified by his daughter's religious fidelity, was widely different from what it had been on the former occasion. The displeasure was no less. But it was held in check. Without any repetition of his command he rose and brought the article required, and bade the customer "Good day." Then he, with apparent calmness, desired his daughter to follow him into another room. He then addressed her, in a subdued and firm tone of voice, "Catherine, I am now sure that you have joined the Methodists. You have long known my views respecting them. I want you to understand my fixed determination respecting yourself. Before this day week you will have, for ever, renounced the *Methodists*, or have, for ever, left this family. Do not *be mistaken*. If you *do* leave my house, you shall

never again enter it; you shall *never* again hear my voice; you shall *never* again, so far as I can prevent it, see my face; you shall *never* again have any intercourse with the family; and shall *never* again, *in any form whatever*, be accounted as belonging to us. Before you decide, *reflect: for your decision will be unalterable.* Next Sunday, Catherine, Methodism will be nothing to you; or you will be nothing to us."

That Sabbath was, to the youthful disciple, a day of gloom and temptation. The world looked very forbidding to one accustomed to the constant supply of her wants without any care on her part. Viewed from the home of her childhood, where she had been cherished in the years of utter helplessness, it seemed as a desert without any path for her feet. She had anticipated the displeasure of her father, but had not expected a determination so stern, and calm, and inflexible. She could, however, not leave the fellowship of those who had led her to Jesus, and whose counsel was still so greatly needed. Besides, would she not, by so doing, fail to confess and follow her Lord? Then, whither was she to go? Her pious grandmother had gone to heaven. Whither could she look for direction and help? The troubled one looked upward. During that Sabbath, and when she had retired to her chamber, she looked to him who never fails those who cry to him for succour.

The next morning she went to the house of the Methodist Superintendent for advice. He was the very man who had prayed for her in her grandmother's house at Laytham. In the summer of 1803 the Rev. Joseph Sutcliffe removed to the York Circuit, and was thus, in the kind providence of God, at hand to afford

sympathy and counsel to the distressed girl. He received her kindly, listened to her tale of sorrow, and burst into tears. When composed, he smiled and said, "Well, my child, I think the Lord will open your way. I believe there is a situation ready for you which will just suit you, and not very far from the place we first met. A gentleman with whom I am acquainted has written to me, and mentioned that he was parting with his governess. You are very young, but I think you would manage. I will ride over at once, and try to make the arrangement." Mr. Sutcliffe's application was successful; and as Catherine's father remained inexorable, she was, on the Sunday following his discovery and decision, a member of Mr. Clarkson's family. Mr. C. was a Methodist class-leader and local preacher, and his wife a truly devoted and active Christian lady. Many years afterwards she who so providentially found a refuge in their home testified: "I had many privileges there, and greatly prized them. Whilst a member of that happy family, I seemed to dwell in the precincts of heaven."

Marmaduke Weaver, though stern, and self-willed, loved his children after his own fashion. He had dearly loved Catherine, and had, in many respects, been proud of her. Perhaps the hard, iron-willed man had, unknown to himself or others, made a sort of idol of this child. Perhaps the unreasonable and overwhelming force of his anger arose in part from the circumstance that she whom he had prized had been the occasion of his mortification. After Catherine's departure from his home the question would rise within the soul of the father, "Did I act wisely or *kindly in thus driving my child among strangers?*"

The home at York did not seem so sunny as before. Certainly the banished one had appeared of late to have more of God's presence than any who were left. Mr. W. was not accustomed to acknowledge himself in the wrong; but he could not avoid doubting in his inner self whether in this he had been right. At length he resolved to go to the Methodist chapel and hear for himself. Of course he had not changed his mind. But there would be no harm in going once. It might not always be wise to judge from mere hearsay. He went, was surprised, and convinced. He was not converted from sin to God; but he was fully persuaded that if any persons on earth were travelling towards heaven these were among the number. He took a pew in the chapel at once, and conducted his family thither that they might hear the Gospel preached, as he thought, with greater simplicity and power than he had ever heard it proclaimed before.

The Methodists of York were at that time engaged in a work which to them appeared stupendous. They had determined to erect a large chapel in New Street. Many were afraid at their own boldness. How could the needful money be raised? But the day appointed for the laying the foundation stone arrived. Strange to say, that day was regarded by Marmaduke Weaver as a high festival. His heart was glad; not merely because the people whom he had, at length, learned to know and admire had thus far succeeded in their sacred project, but also, perhaps chiefly, because on that day he should see his daughter Catherine. A correspondence had been opened of friendly kind. It had not been deemed desirable that Catherine should at once leave the family who had been so kind

to her. But she was assured of her father's good-will ; and, when the stone was laid, she was to visit York, and spend a little time in the family circle of her childhood. Great was the gladness when the banished daughter once more crossed the threshold.

Eighteen months later Miss Weaver was summoned to York on account of the serious illness of her father. Mr. Weaver was suffering severely from dropsy, and not expected to recover. As soon as she entered his room, and before she was aware of his intention, he rose from his bed and attempted on his knees to ask forgiveness of the daughter whom he regarded himself as having grievously wronged. Whilst laid on his bed in much pain and excessive feebleness, he expressed his thankfulness that his dear child had been upheld during that terrible ordeal. He thought it probable that had she yielded to his unrighteous injunctions, the family might all have gone on in blindness of heart, and sinfulness of life, until they had perished in their iniquity. Mr. Sutcliffe had not yet left York, though on the point of doing so. He was sent for, that he might pray with and counsel Mr. Weaver, and other good men were gladly welcomed for the same purpose.

As her father appeared to rally a little Miss Weaver returned to her duties, resolving, however, fully to attend to her dear father's parting request : " My child, pray for me." About a month after she thus took leave of her father, as she was walking, with her
 's, in the park, a powerful impression was made
 : mind that the latest day of her beloved father's
 1 arrived. On her return to the house she
 ! the impression to Mrs. Clarkson, and added

that it was so strong and sacred that she should like permission to spend the night in secret prayer on his behalf. Mrs. C. encouraged her to do so, observing, "What leads to God, comes from God." During the night, whilst pleading the precious promises, Catherine received a sweet assurance, which she doubted not came from the Spirit of God, that her dear father had been "accepted in the Beloved," and that speedily he would be among the glorified "who have washed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb." In the course of a few hours afterwards the tidings were brought to her from York that her father had departed this life ; but that he had died penitently trusting in the merits of the Saviour for salvation, and humbly rejoicing in a sin-pardoning God.

After the death of her father it was deemed advisable that Catherine should return home to assist her widowed mother. Assiduously did she seek the conversion of that mother, and, after thirty years of hope deferred, witnessed it as before narrated. At length we find her as a widow residing at Whiston, and telling of the goodness of her Lord. Her granddaughter, Sophia Denham, and many others were blessed by the testimony of the aged pilgrim. Her life had been a varied one. During the greater part it was marked by fidelity and much usefulness. Towards its close some dark shadows fell on the path. These were, however, dispersed by a gracious God ; and, about six year's after Sophia's visit to her, the widow departed this life, trusting in the merits of her Redeemer, and sustained by the assurance of his mercy.

CHAPTER IV.

EARLIER LESSONS AT SCHOOL.

“O thou who sitt’st enthroned on high,
Ancient of days! Eternal King!
May childhood and mortality
Hope thou wilt listen whilst they sing?

We raise our songs; but, oh, to thee,
What praise can mortal tongue impart.
Till thou hast tuned to harmony,
That jarring instrument, the heart?

Then, infant warblings in thine ear,
As sweet as angel notes shall roll;
For thou wilt bend from heaven to hear
The still, soft music of the soul.”

H. NEELE.

EARLY in the year 1856 Sophia was sent to School at Riccall, near York. Her uncle, Mr. Charles Denham, conducted a school there, and Sophia was placed under his care. Hitherto she had been associated, almost exclusively, with those who were Methodists, as well as Christians. Even the children with whom she had talked, and played, and learned, had been taught to respect religion everywhere, and especially as enjoyed and manifested among the Wesleyan Methodists. At Riccall it was otherwise. Her uncle and his family were accustomed to attend the services of the Established Church; and, among the children

attending the school it was to be expected that there would be several who were unconcerned respecting spiritual things, and some really opposed to true religion. Sophia's attachment to the Saviour, and to the church of her parents, and of her own early choice, was thus to be tested. She was, however, to be allowed to enjoy the religious privileges she had learned to prize, and no perils to her spiritual life were likely to be found in her path, but such, as by Divine grace, even a youthful disciple might overcome. Two advantages therefore might be hoped for from this change in Sophia's position:—Her own soul would be strengthened, if she proved faithful;—and those who, perhaps, had hitherto enjoyed fewer advantages than herself, might be benefited by her consistent example and gentle counsel.

From the letters written by Sophia at this time, and the diary she kept, we have an opportunity of observing the early growth of her inner life. Some have felt this to be an interesting occupation. Others who never saw her may be pleased by some brief extracts. There is an interest in tracing anything that is beautiful or excellent to its commencement. The source of the Nile, so long kept among the secrets of nature, was eagerly sought after. Men were ready to endure hardships, and lavish their wealth, and risk their lives, in hope that they might discover the beginning of that mighty and fertilizing stream on the banks of which vast cities had flourished. More than one intrepid traveller died with the mistaken belief that his name would be handed down to succeeding generations as the successful explorer of the source of the Nile. *The excursionist in our island may find several local-*

"January 28. Monday.—Another week has gone. Am I better in consequence of its blessings and privileges? I trust I am. I think I have been enabled to put my confidence more fully in God, and purpose trying to live nearer to him. During the past week I have had the subject of death still more deeply impressed on my mind. I have also felt an earnest desire for the conversion of sinners, especially my cousins and my darling brother John. May the time speedily come when all the world shall fear God. The Lord grant this for his name's sake."

"February 27.—It is with great pleasure that I again record the goodness of the Lord. We have had special services, and preaching every night, and God has blessed us."

Having the permission of those to whom the letters were addressed, we may select a few extracts written about the same time, and expressing the views and feelings of a prayerful child, trying to be good, but only in her twelfth year.

"Riccall, January, 1856.

My dear papa,

It was with great pleasure I heard such good news about cousin Mary. I trust she will soon be able to rejoice in God as her reconciled Father. Your letter, or at least the good news in it, did good, to somebody else besides me, for Sarah seems stirred up by the tidings concerning Mary to hope the best for Louisa, and hopes that perhaps she might listen to anything we should say to her: Sarah has for some *time felt discouraged*, and prevented from speaking to *her soul*, because when she used formerly to

speak to her concerning good things she used to laugh and ridicule her. Sarah has told me a great deal about her own conversion. We have not much opportunity for such conversation except when we have retired to rest, and for a short time at noon. We meet at noon at the best of all places, our Heavenly Father's throne, and feel prayer to be very sweet. I see more than ever the hand of my gracious God, and am convinced that all things work together for good to them that love him. When I first came here many things seemed strange and unpleasant. Cousin seemed at that time indisposed for conversation. I was ready to wish that I had remained at Chesterfield. But I find that my being here has proved a help to me, rather than a hindrance to my growth in grace.

With love to all, I remain,

Your ever affectionate daughter,

SOPHIA.

Rev. T. Denham."

" Riccall, near York.

My darling John,

I think a letter from Sophy will please you, and I am therefore beginning to write to you. If you cannot read it yourself, you can ask sister Mary to read it to you.

I hope you are trying to be a good boy, and striving to please papa, and mamma, and sister, and cousin, and to be quiet and attentive at school. I trust my dear brother will be good at all times and in all places.

You must pray, dear John, that God may change *your heart*, and make you his child.

May the Lord bless you, and keep you, and cause his face to shine upon you. This is the sincere prayer of your affectionate sister,

SOPHY.

P.S.—When sister has time, perhaps she will guide your hand, and help you to write a letter to me. Accept the little mark I am sending. Good night, my darling little brother.”

“ February 20, 1856.

My dearest papa,

No one knows with what pleasure I sit down thus to talk to you on paper. I do wish that the communion could be face to face. But my absence from you is according to the will of God. Let him do with me as seemeth to him best. I feel assured that it is for some good end that I have been sent here. May I be enabled so to live to his glory in this world, that I may reign with him in that bright world where we shall never part again. What a delightful thought it is that there need not be one wanting in that day when God shall make up his jewels. I am striving to live near to him. I am fully convinced that there is no true happiness apart from him.

I am often much blessed whilst looking towards Calvary. I want to look thither more frequently, and with stronger faith. I would ever be near to my Saviour's bleeding side.

I do wish that I could go to chapel oftener than I am now allowed to do. At most I only get on *Sundays*, and to my class on Wednesday. Now *during Lent* there is service at church, and uncle

likes us to be there; and, of course, I cannot be at both places. The clergyman here is, I believe a truly converted man, and preaches very nice sermons. But I do not enjoy the service so much as I do when at chapel, nor do I think that I ever shall be able to profit so much.

When I do go to chapel I often wish, dear father, that I could see you in the pulpit. But our separation is the Lord's doing, and I hope to be ever resigned to his will.

I trust that the work of the Lord is reviving at Chesterfield. How sweet to me is the very name of Chesterfield. It brings to mind those dear ones who live there. O that I could see them and talk to them. Sometimes when at school I forget what I am doing, and gaze at the door, as though expecting some of you coming in. I am painfully aroused by somebody speaking to me, or by the door being opened by some one. Then I remember that I ought to be getting on with my work, and try to do so diligently.

With best love, I remain,

Your ever affectionate daughter."

"Riccall, —, 1856.

My dear sister,

I received your letter one day last week. I did not, my darling sister, for one moment think that you had forgotten me at the throne of grace. But I do need your prayers very much, that I may be kept near to the bleeding Lamb. May the day soon come when I shall be wholly his, pure, and loving, without spot or blemish.

Would it not be nice employment for John to learn verses of Scripture, or some hymns. I think I can send you material for some ornamental tickets to encourage him. On the blank side you must write the number of the hymn for learning of which he received the ticket. Tell him that I was much pleased with his note. He must soon write to Sophy again.

Good bye, my dearest darling love of a sister,
I remain, your
SOPHIA."

"July 31, 1856.

My very dear mamma,

You will think me a very long time in writing to you; but you must please to be so kind as to forgive my apparent negligence. I will try to write sooner another time. I have several times begun writing to you, but have made so many mistakes that I have thrown the faulty letter into the fire. . . .

I must add a few words concerning what I know you wish most of all to hear of. I am thankful to God that my soul is prospering. At times I do feel very low; but, when I look to Jesus, he lifts me up, and I am enabled to go on my way rejoicing. Some days Satan tempts me sorely, and I am ready to think that it is impossible for me to overcome. But God does not let the adversary get the victory. I am enabled, time after time, to triumph through grace divine, and rejoice in God my Saviour. Blessed be his name.

• Jesus is very precious to me. Sometimes my heart *overflows with gratitude* to God, and I am filled with

a quiet and settled peace. This is not, however, always the case. At other times Satan harrasses my soul, and even tempts me to give up religion altogether. That, by God's help and mercy, I never will do. My earnest desire and prayer is that I may be guided through this life by God's counsel, and afterwards received to glory. May I meet you all in yon bright world, and reign with you there for ever and ever.

Begging an interest in your prayers,

I remain, your very affectionate daughter,

SOPHIA."

Early in the year 1857, having recently completed her twelfth year, we find her for a season at the home of her father, thankful for the privileges and joys there afforded to her, and, in her journal, thus recording her grateful sense of the goodness of her God.

"February 13th, 1857. Chesterfield.—Glory be to God for what I feel of his goodness to me. To my soul, he is to-night the fairest of ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. We have had a good prayer-meeting. The Lord was certainly among us. Glory be to his name! He is also converting sinners all around us, and we are determined both to look for and pray for a revival among ourselves. The Lord has graciously revived his work in my heart, and I am more than ever resolved that I will strive to live to him myself, and endeavour to win others to him.

"When I think of God's amazing love to poor sinners, and his care over me, the language of my heart is—

'When all thy mercies, O my God,

My rising soul surveys,

Transported with the view I'm lost,

In wonder, love, and praise.'

I cannot but wonder how it was that I delayed so long to yield my heart to him. May the Lord now abundantly bless me for Christ's sake."

"February 14th, Saturday.—Another day has passed. I have made little progress. Too often I have been found off my guard, and have therefore yielded to the temptations of Satan. I have not been found in prayer so often as I ought to have been, nor have my thoughts been directed towards Christ as they should have been. May I live nearer to God, if I am spared until to-morrow. Amen."

"April 19th. Sunday.—The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is to be administered to-day, and I am permitted to be there. I feel myself very unworthy to partake of those elements which set forth the precious body and blood of my Saviour. My heart overflows with love and gratitude to the blessed Redeemer, when I think how he suffered on the cross for me. I must do something for him who did so much for me. I am determined that by his grace I will make him known to those around by a holy life."

These extracts might be multiplied; but perhaps sufficient has been furnished to disclose how Sophia entered on her school-life, and with what sincerity and earnestness she endeavoured to become what the Lord would have her be. The rivulet had not an unvarying course. It did not always flow along a smooth bed, nor always glitter in the sunshine. There were obstructions and gloom. But the little stream was flowing in a right direction, and was increasing in size and power. Wherever Sophia went she carried with her the religion of Christ. There was in all *places a throne of grace*, and to that treasury of

divine strength, and purity, and comfort, the child did not fail to go. In the early part of the year 1859 we find her with her uncle and aunt at Masbrough, and then at Brigg with her father who had been appointed the Superintendent of that circuit. But, amid these changes, Sophia still felt and manifested her determination to remain at the Master's feet, endeavouring to learn his gracious will that she might do it.

CHAPTER V.

LATER LESSONS AT SCHOOL.

“Seek virtue !—Wear her armour to the fight ;
Then, as a wrestler gathers strength from strife,
Shalt thou be nerved to a more vigorous might
By each contending turbulent ill of life.
Seek virtue. —She alone is all divine ;
And having found, be strong, in God’s own strength and thine.”
ANON.

AFTER the summer vacation of 1859, Sophia went to a school at Northampton. She was then in her fifteenth year. Though but a girl she was resting on the Saviour’s atonement, in the exercise of an intelligent faith, and striving, day by day, to know more of her Lord’s will, that she might do it. She loved her Redeemer, and was cheered by the gracious promises made by him to his disciples. All the graces of God’s Holy Spirit had been planted within her heart, had taken root, and were increasing in vitality and beauty. There was not the wealth of soul appertaining to the aged disciple, but the hidden treasure was really within her heart, and was augmenting. She was, as a girl, diligently employing the grace given, and it was consequently receiving increase. Sophia was growing *in grace and in the knowledge of her Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. This will be apparent as we

peruse a few extracts taken from her journal of this period.

“Northampton, August 17th, 1859. Wednesday.—For the first time in this town, I have been to class. I do indeed feel grateful to my heavenly Father for allowing me again to meet with his people. It is a privilege which I can scarcely prize too highly. Whilst of late I have been partially deprived of this means of grace, I have greatly felt its loss. I was not, however, deprived of the presence of my Saviour. When I could not have intercourse with his people, he was graciously present with me, and blessed my soul. When I look back on his dealings with me from my earliest days, I am constrained to say, ‘His banner over me has been love.’ True my path has sometimes been dark and cloudy; but, often, those things which I counted among my greatest trials have proved to be among my greatest blessings. I can now praise my God for all that is past; and, by his grace, I will trust him for all that is to come.

“But, oh, when I call to mind my own unfaithfulness I do feel deeply humbled before God. I desire to live to him. I want to be such that all around may take knowledge of me that I belong to Christ. May he grant unto me the assistance of his Holy Spirit.”

“August 24th.—Have just returned from class. I was truly glad to go to the house of the Lord. During part of the week my mind was greatly depressed, chiefly through being too much engrossed with earthly tasks and cares. I had, all the time, a desire to do that which is right, and pleasing to my heavenly Father, but had not the earnestness in *spiritual* duties, which I ought to have had. C

Sunday morning, however, whilst Mr. Stokoe preached from, 'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest,' I felt it to be a good time. Since then I have enjoyed much of the Lord's presence and blessing.

"I earnestly want to be more watchful. Though I think that I would not, knowingly, do anything that would grieve God, yet I often find that I have done that which, if I had duly considered, I should have left altogether undone, or should have done in a different manner. May I have more grace, so as to do all to the glory of God."

"Sunday, August 28th, 1859.—Truly the language of my heart is—

'Sweet is the day of sacred rest,
No mortal cares disturb my breast ;
O may my heart in tune be found,
Like David's harp of solemn sound.'

Well might the Psalmist say, 'How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.' This morning I felt much of the presence of the Lord. O what a mercy to be enabled to retain a clear sense of my acceptance with God. Satan often tempts me. But I am enabled to say, 'Get thee behind me.' God gives to me the witness of his Spirit. 'Jesus loves me for his own, and loves his helpless little one.'

"During the past few weeks, however, I have felt much of the frailty of man, and the constant need to look to the Lord for my help. Blessed

according to his promises, strong to deliver. I will praise him."

"August 30, 1859.—When shall I live without sinning against the God I love? Daily and hourly I find that my evil heart of unbelief would lead me astray from the right way. A review of my life humbles me in the dust before God. I am led to exclaim with Job, 'Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee?' I must lay my hand upon my mouth, and cry, 'unclean.' Yet I do bless God that, notwithstanding my unfaithfulness, I feel that my name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

"Sept. 1, 1859.—I do feel ashamed of myself when I reflect on my many wanderings from God. Last week a circumstance occurred which seemed likely to prove a great trial to me. I fear that I only half-trusted the Lord concerning it. My heart was inclined to murmur and repine. To-day, God has shewn to me that the event is likely to prove a great blessing to me.

"I often discover so much evil in my heart that I am ready to give up in despair. But I remember how Christ has said, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.'"

"Sept. 2, 1859.—I have just returned from the Dorcas meeting. Mr. Cheesewright was there, and read some excellent extracts. I was led to pray for more love to God, and greater earnestness in his cause. I feel that I have been doing very little for Christ. I am enabled to commend my Saviour by a holy

'5, 1859.—This morning I listened
 sermon from the Rev. James E.
 out your own salvation; &c.

(Phil. ii. 12, 13.) I saw more clearly than ever that a Christian's life must not be an idle one. There is much to be done. Lord, help me to work for Thee. In the evening, I heard another faithful sermon from the words : ' And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.' I feel that I have too often been like Peter in his fall. If I have not, by words, denied the Lord, I have, by culpable silence, failed to acknowledge Him, because ashamed of Him, and unwilling to suffer for his sake."

"Sunday, Jan. 15, 1860. Brigg —At home. Through the abounding goodness of my God I was spared to enter on another year, and allowed to visit the home of my parents. May the year, which has already begun to speed away, bear a better record to heaven than that which has gone.

"During the past three weeks we have been holding revival prayer-meetings. God is reviving his work in other places, and I trust He will revive his work at Brigg. Is He not doing so already, by stirring up his people to seek, day after day, the outpouring of his Spirit on sinners?

"I feel much dissatisfied with my own state. I do not feel that warmth of love to God which I should like to experience.

"I want more zeal in the service of Christ. I ought to do more for Him. There are, no doubt, many ways in which I might work for God, if I were only on the look out to discover and employ them. To-day I have resolved to send a suitable tract to a person who keeps his shop open on the Sabbath. May God bless this little effort, for Christ's sake.

"My desire is greater than ever to devote myself, body and soul, to God. I hardly dare to promise so to do. I have been so often unfaithful through unwatchfulness. The other day I was greatly impressed whilst reading the words: 'That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.' (Philippians ii. 15.)

"We have at present a servant who evidently watches very narrowly any who profess to belong to Christ. I tremble lest she should discern in me any inconsistency, and thereby be injured in any degree. Often am I overwhelmed, as it were, by a sense of my responsibility, when I consider that I am hourly exerting an influence, for good, or for evil, on those around me. May it be for good."

"January 26, 1860. Northampton.—I have again arrived at school. I think that I never before felt a separation from my dear friends so painfully. To leave home was exceedingly distressing. Since I arrived at Northampton, I have been very low indeed. At all hours it has been difficult to restrain my tears. Still I have experienced much comfort from the reflection that, though separated from my earthly father and friends, I have sweet access to my best Friend, my Father in heaven. Never before did I feel so fully the vanity of earthly joys and hopes. What a comfort it is to know that the happiness resulting from true religion will have no diminution, and no end."

"April 24, 1860.—When I think of myself, and scrutinize my own heart, I deeply feel that to me,

indeed, belongeth shame and confusion of face. I dare not approach God in any way but that which has been mercifully provided for sinners. My only confidence is in the sacrifice and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Mediator by whom I have access to the Father. He is my Redeemer, and gave his life for me, that I might live a life concealed in him. I am truly thankful that through Christ I can approach the throne of grace with humble boldness. I know that there no good thing will be refused to me.

"The language of my heart at present is, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" And though I scarcely dare say, 'There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee,' yet I have gracious reason to know that the favour of God is my chief delight, and to do the will of God my constant aim. I trust, if such were his will, that I should be enabled to yield up all things rather than forfeit his smile, and the privilege of holding fellowship with him.

"On Sunday I was, once more, permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper. As I did so I realised in a sweet degree the force of these lines:—

'Me, with all my sins I cast,
On the Atoning Lamb.'

What should we do without the atonement? I often derive comfort from that declaration: 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.' It is sweet to turn from the creature, all defiled with sin, to the 'Righteous Lord who loveth righteousness.'"

"May 25, 1860.—I feel much dissatisfied with myself. I seem to go on without any increase in

spiritual life, and energy, and wisdom. I have constant reason to say,

‘I have no skill the snare to shun,
But thou, O Christ, my Wisdom art ;
I ever into ruin run,
But thou art greater than my heart.’

I try to look to the Saviour for strength to overcome the temptations which beset my path. The place of prayer I find to be a place of refuge in the hour of danger.

‘Satan trembles when he sees,
The weakest saint upon his knees.’

Thus it has often proved in my case.”

“May 28, 1860.—Yesterday we had an excellent sermon from the Rev. Benjamin Hellier. He exhorted us not to rest satisfied with present attainments, but earnestly to press forward to the enjoyment of Christian perfection. I am thankful that the fulness of Scripture truth is laid before us. There is a blessed sweetness in these doctrines.

“I am thankful that the Lord is bringing his people of various denominations, nearer to each other, and uniting them in the bonds of holy brotherhood. I rejoice in the united prayer-meetings now held in many places throughout the world.

‘O Jesus, ride on till all are subdued.’”

“June 17, 1860.—Through the loving kindness of my heavenly Father I have been allowed once more to reach my home in safety, and to meet those whom I most dearly love.

“I felt sad in parting with my friends at Northampton. I could not but feel sorrowful, although I

was returning to the home in which I so greatly delight. It was painful to separate from those who had been kind to me. I felt it also to be very solemn, as it is not probable that we shall ever all meet again in this world. I could not leave Northampton without regret. A night or two before I left, I received my Quarterly Ticket. The minister said to me, 'Your father is a holy and devoted servant of God. The promise is to us and to our children. I feel assured that the blessing of your father's God will rest upon you.'

"As I listened to this testimony concerning the excellence of my dear father I could not refrain from tears. They were tears of mingled joy and sorrow. I was thankful that I had so good a father, but was painfully humbled that he had so unworthy a daughter. May God help me to become a comfort to my father."

Whilst at Northampton, Sophia, in company with her friends visited a nunnery. As was not unnatural she was greatly interested in this event. She carefully observed all that they were permitted to see, and looked upon the nuns, and novices, and pupils, with deep sympathy and painful emotion. Perhaps the judgment formed by a girl in her sixteenth year would not be regarded generally as possessing much weight, yet she formed a judgment notwithstanding, and recorded it, as she did most things, in her journal. She came to the conclusion that, throughout the convent, the inmates were instructed to appear happy, and that when visitors were present they endeavoured to do so; but that they had little real enjoyment, and failed in the attempt to impose on observers. Whether *judging correctly* or *incorrectly*, Sophia was impressed *by appearance*, in her estimation, of vacancy, result-
intelligence and happiness.

The visit to the convent was, however, remembered by Sophia on another account. There was a reason more closely appertaining to herself, and the occasion of much self-abasement, which caused her to retain a very lively though not joyous recollection of the visit she had anticipated with so much pleasurable interest.

When the party arrived at the convent, and stated their wish to look over it, they were informed that their wish could not be gratified on that occasion, as it was Holy Saturday. It would seem that in the tone of the reply there was something discouraging, and that they had reason to think that they would not be allowed to see much at any future time. The lady, who was in special charge of the youthful visitors, and whom we will speak of as Mrs. X., extemporised an inquiry which she thought might secure an extension of favour. She begged to know what the terms were on which pupils of various classes were admitted to the nunnery schools. Now it so happened that young ladies who had received part of their education in the school at which Sophia was learning had received another part of that education in the nunnery schools. It was not improbable, therefore, that the information now requested by Mrs. X. might, sometime, be employed to the advantage of the convent. But, on the other hand, it was certain that Mrs. X. was not asking it for that end. She had no young ladies in view to whom she intended to convey the information. A moment before she had no intention of asking the question. Her request was merely what she regarded as a clever artifice by which she might secure what otherwise would not be given. The artifice appeared to succeed. They were informed, but now with

evident regret and great politeness, that it would be altogether impracticable for them to see much of the nunnery on that day. The engagements of the inmates on Holy Saturday absolutely precluded that. But, if the ladies would be so kind as to call any day during the following week, every possible attention would be paid to them. They might fix on any day, and it should be made convenient to those having charge of the establishment. It is not likely that Sophia Denham, under any circumstances, would have been guilty of such an equivocation, however harmless many would judge it to be. As she neither uttered it, nor suggested it, we need not be surprised that the visit to the convent was concluded, and all her observations made and recorded without any inquiry into the part she had taken in obtaining a sight desired by the means employed.

It so happened, however, that Sophia, soon after her arrival at Northampton, had formed an acquaintance with a godly woman, named Mrs. B——. Had it not been for the Methodist class-meeting it is scarcely likely that Sophia would have been favoured in this particular. Mrs. B—— felt deeply interested in the gentle girl, who had come to Northampton, a stranger, and had found her way to the class of which Mrs. B—— was a member. Sophia was heartily glad to find a friend, godly, affectionate, and experienced. The two speedily became much attached to each other. Most of her cares, and sorrows, and enjoyments, did Sophia tell to her adviser. Nothing respecting the visit to the convent was concealed from Mrs. B——. The question was then kindly, yet frankly, suggested whether the deception which

had been practised was justifiable, and whether Sophia had not, by participating in the advantage, rendered herself a party to the fault. Mrs. B—— also referred to the evil which might arise in future years from the influence exerted on the younger pupils who were present on the occasion. They would not be likely to forget how some whom they regarded as wise and good had, to secure a trifling advantage, employed, or tacitly sanctioned, a species of duplicity. As all the girls knew that Sophia was a minister's daughter, and older than themselves, they might be ready to conclude that such equivocation as she took advantage of must be justifiable; and that, therefore, when in future years, similar duplicity would further their ends they need not hesitate to employ it.

We have already seen that Sophia's conscience was exceedingly tender. She at once perceived, and fully acknowledged her error. Very grateful was she to Mrs. B——, for pointing out the evils which might arise; and the want of Christian firmness manifested in sharing a gratification obtained by what she, at the time, believed to be culpable. She wrote at once to Mrs. B——, thanking her for the frankness and affection shown in her reproof, and declaring that, whilst she had sought and obtained the pardoning mercy of God, she could never forget the error. A brief extract from this letter may be instructive.

“ Dear Mrs. B——,

I feel very grateful to my heavenly Father for giving me such a friend as yourself, especially whilst I am here, far from those who would take an interest in the welfare of my soul. I am very much obliged to

you for the gentle reproof of yesterday morning. It led me to see my sin in a new light. I had before thought of it as an offence against God, but not of the mischievous influence it might have on others. . . .

"I shall always feel obliged by your telling me if you see any thing in my conduct inconsistent with my profession of Christian discipleship."

At a later period Sophia writes to the same highly esteemed friend,

"My very dear Mrs. B——,

It pleased me greatly to see your handwriting once again, and to learn that my misgivings as to your changed feelings were unfounded.

"I was sorry to hear of Miss B——'s affliction, and deeply sympathise with her. But we know that to us,

'Afflictions though they seem severe,
Are all in mercy sent.'

'We know that all things work together for good, to them that love God.' Then how much we need those gentle reminders. Our hearts are so prone to wander from our heavenly Father, and to be unduly taken up with the fleeting things of time. Our affections are so apt to entwine themselves around earthly objects instead of being set on those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

"I too have, during the week, been suffering somewhat severely. I feel very thankful, however, for the sweet spirit of resignation granted to me during periods of strong pain. I have been enabled to say, 'Father, not my will, but thine be done.' I derived consolation from the thought that even in my affliction God *was answering my prayers*. I have often been led to

ask that the Lord would do anything with me that seemed best to him, if he would only lead me nearer to himself, and make me more holy and devoted.

"Of late I have had some very humbling views of myself. Last Sunday morning my class-leader preached a faithful sermon from Psalm xv. I was led to say within my heart,

‘ I loathe myself when God I see,
And into nothing fall ;
Content, if thou exalted be,
And Christ be all in all.’

"I am reading, with great interest, ‘Foster’s Essays.’ I am also very partial to ‘Young’s Night Thoughts.’ I love to ponder on the subject of Immortality. Yes, this soul of mine shall live for ever. Dr. Young forcibly expresses thoughts which faintly struggle within my breast. Thus he says,

‘ A soul immortal, spending all her fires,
Wasting her strength in strenuous idleness ;
Thrown into tumults, raptured or alarmed
At ought this scene can threaten or indulge,
Resembles ocean into tempest tost
To waft a feather or to drown a fly.
Where falls this censure ? It o’erwhelms myself !
How was my heart incrustated by the world !
O how self-festered was my grovelling soul !
How, like a worm, was I wrapt round and round
In silken thought which reptile Fancy spun
Till darkened Reason lay quite clouded o’er
With soft conceit of endless comfort here
Nor yet put forth her wings to reach the skies.’

"But I have a favour to ask before I close. A dear friend of mine exchanges notes with me on *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*. Will you favour

me with a few thoughts, from time to time, on the Psalms? I should esteem this a great boon and aid. I have found the interchange very profitable to myself. I am apt to read without giving *all* my attention to the subject before me. It would fare ill with the voyager if he consulted his chart as seldom and as heedlessly as I have consulted the Book which God has, in mercy, given me for my guidance to the quiet and blissful haven. I wish to do better in future.

"In reply to your last, wherein you speak of 'Female Effort,' I may tell you that I and my friend, before mentioned, have made one or two efforts to form a cottage meeting for reading the word of God, prayer, &c. Our attempts, however, have been unsuccessful. We are both of opinion that our failure is the result of our not being fully the Lord's. One holy woman has begun a similar meeting in one of the worst parts of the town, and God has abundantly blessed her efforts—but she is *so* good, *so* humble.

"Then there is India, and our poor Hindoo sisters. I think of the millions living under the government of our Queen, yet knowing nothing of our Saviour. I long to do something for these. Yet I know not anything than I can do, except pray for them.

"There is another subject which I *must* name. Some Christian ladies in Geneva have agreed to spend some time every Friday evening, between seven and eleven, to pray for their young friends, and on behalf of the youthful everywhere. They ask Christian believers of all countries to join them in this. Will it not be delightful thus to be encouraged by the reflection that thousands of God's children are engaged during the same evening, in asking the same thing,

and that so near to our hearts, and so closely connected with the advancement of Christ's blessed kingdom ! May we not expect abundant answers to such united supplication ? Will you join them ? In your prayers do not forget her who needs so much help, and to whom you have aforetime shewn so much kindness.

"With much love to Miss B—— and your own dear self,

Believe me,

Your firmly attached,

SOPHIA D. DENHAM."

Sophia had left school. She was in her sixteenth year. As will readily be perceived by the foregoing extracts from her journal, her mind had been opened to understand the claims of her God, and there had been formed within her soul an earnest desire to yield to those claims without reserve. She had entered the race for eternal life, and was endeavouring with honesty of purpose, to lay aside all that would impede her progress. Whilst she was, humbly and sorrowfully, weeping that she had hitherto been so unworthy a daughter, her father was daily praising the Lord that his children were walking in the way to heaven ; and that Sophia, while from home, had been, so graciously and fully, led to consecrate herself to the service of that God whom he had long loved and served.

Beneath the parental roof the youthful believer sought to improve the advantages now afforded to her. She knew well, though so young, that if there are dangers arising from association with persons, only some of whom love God ; there are also dangers

arising in the quietest walks of life, and the most godly homes. Sophia set herself to be a Christian disciple whatever the nature of outward circumstances.

Childhood was passing away. The solemn and mysterious future lay before her. Leaving Northampton, to return no more, was felt by her to be an impressive event. The last lesson, as a school-girl, had been received. New tasks were before her. Fresh responsibilities would be hers. Most likely there would be joys and sorrows differing widely from those hitherto experienced. She could not foresee how long the journey of life would be, nor what portion thereof would be marked by sunshine and what portion by gloom. But, if she proved faithful to his grace, the Lord Jehovah, the God of her father, would ever be nigh, and would manifest himself to be her unchangeable friend. It was enough that all would be known to him, and controlled by him. The youthful pilgrim still prayed that he would continue to be "the guide of her youth."

CHAPTER VI.

LEARNING AT HOME.

“ If I were a sunbeam,
I know what I would do ;
I would seek white lilies
Rainy woodlands through.
I would steal among them,
Softest light I'd shed
Until every lily
Raised its drooping head.

If I were a sunbeam,
I know where I'd go ;
Into lowliest hovels,
Dark with want and woe.
Till sad hearts looked upward,
I would shine and shine ;
Till they'd think of heaven,
Their sweet home and mine.”

SCHOOL days were over ! Sophia would no more have to take her place as a pupil in a class, and repeat to a teacher lessons committed to memory. But the dear girl already understood that the days of her learning were only fully commenced. She would now be subjected to various discipline as arranged by Divine Providence, and would have lessons appointed continually, and be at school seven days in every week. Indeed there was another sense in which her school days would be prolonged. It was likely that, after some brief interval, she would be engaged in tuition, and,

of course, for a time, as a youthful teacher, having much to learn. But, according to ordinary phraseology, her school days were over, and, for a time, she returned to her paternal home, right glad to meet her father and others dear to her.

Any change in outward circumstances is likely to exercise some influence over our spiritual condition; and, without earnest watchfulness, that influence will prove unfavourable. When roots are transplanted it is that they may become more vigorous. The fibres are to strike deeper into the earth, and to partake more largely of nourishment, and to find a larger place for growth. The breeze, and the shower, and the sunshine, are all to have freer access to them. So there will be, it is hoped, flowers of richer hue and more abundant fragrance, or fruit larger, and sweeter, and more plenteous. Such is the purpose of the gardener when he transplants the growing roots under his care. But the period of change is not altogether devoid of solicitude. Not unfrequently the result is calamitous. The tender plant which flourished whilst sheltered in the frame or otherwise, and gave promise of large worth or beauty in the future, becomes enfeebled, perhaps loses its vitality altogether, or receives a considerable check. So it is with the human soul, in the various changes of outward sort to which it is subjected. The design of the gracious Husbandman is always benevolent. He desires more fruit and better. He provides that such should be produced. The change is intended for good. Yet is the period one of considerable danger. Because of our own unwatchfulness and worldliness, the concealed evils of our heart, instead of being overcome and destroyed

when discovered by the change, may be allowed to gain some degree of mastery.

It is of course desirable that children, who have, whilst at school or under the direct influence of godly parents, yielded their hearts to the Saviour, should be, in due time, placed in circumstances in which the graces of God's Holy Spirit within them should be tested and invigorated. We could not wish that the days of their childhood and inexperience should be indefinitely prolonged. It is, certainly, desirable that the flower should be allowed to expand, and the fruit be brought to perfection. That the dear children, who have begun to love Jesus, may become men and women of God, they need larger room and a varied discipline. We acquiesce in the arrangements of Divine Providence securing this. Yet we look on with deep solicitude. Are there not thousands of men and women at the present time, who are far from God, perhaps not devoid of the externalism of religion, or, perhaps openly profligate, who, years ago were lovely children and walking, as children, "in the fear of God and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." We cannot alter the plans of the Most High, and must not even wish to do so. But, the youthful disciple must be on his guard as the hour of trial approaches, and those who have safely passed through the ordeal, and are now experienced in the things of God, must afford loving counsel and help to those little ones. So shall the grace of God become gloriously abundant within them. The tender plant shall become like the palm tree and the cedar. In due time those who are now as mere seedlings in the nurseries provided in pious homes and godly schools shall be trees of righteous-

ness, abundant in fruit, glorious in beauty, majestic in strength, blessing the neighbourhood where they have been planted, and fitted for the paradise of God. Sophia Denham safely passed through this period of change; because, in earnest, persevering, and believing prayer, she sought help from the Most High.

The latter part of the year 1860 was chiefly spent at home. Sophia was still earnestly seeking to know the will of her Lord, that she might do it. At times she was greatly depressed in consequence of the temptations of the adversary, and because of imperfections in herself of which she was more conscious than those around her were. She had discovered in God's blessed word a high standard of excellence. This she constantly placed before her mind, and ardently sought its attainment. Because she did not fully attain that she was seeking, she was, at times, greatly discouraged, and could find no comfort except in approaching the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and, in the exercise of penitent faith, plunging into that fountain. To others her conduct appeared exceedingly exemplary, and well calculated to remind thoughtful onlookers of the admonition given by St. Peter to godly women: "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves," &c.

Whilst at home, and in her general deportment, *Sophia* manifested a docile and retiring spirit, making

it apparent that she did not forget her youth and inexperience, nor wish to overstep the bounds suitable for girlhood; she sought, as far as possible, to do good, attending to that Apostolic direction, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." Traces of her fidelity to Christ, her lowliness of mind, and her compassion for souls may be readily discerned in her journal and letters.

"June 21, 1860.—Tried to do a little for Christ. Most likely I made myself look somewhat ridiculous in the estimation of the worldly. But I was not distressed by this consideration, as I was acting for my blessed Lord."

"June 22, 1860.—I felt happy when placing a few tracts by the way-side, hoping that they would attract the attention of passers by, and do them good. May the tracts be thus made a blessing."

"June 23, 1860.—Have been in Sheffield in order to have my likeness taken. I spoke a few words to the woman of the house on the subject of religion. She seemed very anxious that her husband and children should be brought to God, yet careless concerning herself. She evidently knew the plan of salvation. I am afraid that I did not speak to her with sufficient plainness and distinctness concerning her own state. I did, however, venture to give her a few tracts, and I hope that they may be a blessing to her. I also gave some tracts to others whom I met, and left some laid on the seat of the railway carriage, and in the omnibus. May God make the seed, thus sown by a feeble hand, to grow. I arrived at home in safety, and wept tears of joy and gratitude at being allowed once more to *meet my beloved father and sister.* Mamma is still at

Cleethorpes. May my residence at home be made a blessing."

"July 7, 1860.—I trust that my earnest, my most ardent wish is to glorify God. I often pray, from the very depths of my heart that, if there is any secret idol which keeps me from fully living to God, he will disclose it to me, and give me grace to put it away. I feel very anxious about Lizzie and Ellen C——. I have, two or three times, conversed with Ellen on the subject of personal religion. I am determined not to give up praying for them. Last Tuesday I again met with my former class-leader. I greatly enjoyed the meeting. His remarks were very suitable, and were made a blessing to my soul. Sometimes I feel anxious about the future, and yet I trust that it is not a culpable anxiety. I feel assured that the God who has hitherto so gently and graciously led me, will now and ever, make my path plain. Blessed Lord, be with me always."

"July 9, 1860.—During the last few days I have enjoyed close and intimate communion with my heavenly Father. I have felt that his presence has indeed accompanied me, and that he has given me rest. Particularly have I been blessed when engaged in secret devotion. Though I have sometimes gone to my closet weary and heavy laden, yet, in a few moments I have been led to exclaim,—

‘My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this ;
And sit and sing herself away,
To everlasting bliss.’

Nor have I been blest only when shut in with my Father in secret, or waiting upon him in the public

ordinances of his house. Often when I have been engaged in worldly duties I have been enabled to raise my soul to Jesus, and have experienced much of his blessing."

About this time Sophia had to endure somewhat of trial. Though the occasions of her distress are mentioned in her journal with considerable explicitness, we must refrain from copying those extracts, because we believe that her gentleness and kindness of spirit would have led her, had occasion served, to have positively forbidden their being disclosed. They are only referred to in order that the grace of her Lord may be magnified by the statement that she was blessedly sustained. She was, indeed, at times, led to weep before God. Her heart was wounded. But she repaired to the Divine Healer. He applied the balm of his consolation, and the sufferer was enabled to rejoice. In the risen, living, present Saviour, she had peace. He had overcome the world. He had triumphed on her behalf, and was now her all-sufficient Deliverer. It was as when Jesus said to the disciples who were in distress : — " Let not your heart be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions : if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. . . These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world."

A form of trial which may be mentioned, and which will serve to indicate how other trials were endured, was frequent and distressing tooth-ache. To this *Sophia* often refers in her journal, as she does to

whatever was an occasion of joy or sadness. But there is always appended or implied, some testimony to the value of true religion, as manifested amid severe pain. That is of priceless worth which can impart comfort amid pain, (which may amount to agony without ensuring much attention or sympathy from on-lookers), and can impart gladness during intervals of ease.

That was a somewhat weighty testimony on behalf of Christ's religion which was furnished by one who had been thus severely suffering, and who was asked, as the family with whom he was staying were sitting down to breakfast, how he had spent the night. "My tooth," he replied, "was very bad all night. I could not sleep at all, and it is no better now. But, let us praise the Lord. My soul is safe. I will bless the Lord, if every tooth in my head aches."

The support which Sophia found under this kind of suffering will serve to represent that which was given to her when tried in other ways. She writes :—

"July 15, 1860. Sunday.—This has been a good day to my soul, although I have been suffering much from tooth-ache. My mind has rested on Christ. To-night, especially, while sister was at chapel, I was led to examine myself. I longed for a clearer witness of the Spirit that I did enjoy the blessing of Entire Sanctification. I felt those words applied to my heart with much power :—'The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.' I felt that it cleansed me. I afterwards had a sweet season with sister in prayer."

"July 16, 1860.—My precious brother left us this *morning* for school. I do feel very anxious about him. *He has very much to contend with.* Very few of the

boys are converted. Those who are, especially the younger ones, are much ridiculed if they endeavour to shew that they are on the Lord's side. I ought to spend more time in prayer for him. I feel that I have not done all I might have done on his behalf. I have, especially, not been sufficiently earnest in my prayers for him. Lord, draw out my soul towards Thee on his behalf, more fully and frequently. Be pleased to keep him from evil, and make him a blessing to many."

"August 8, 1860.—Since I last wrote I have had to pass through the waters of affliction. But I have found that when my sorrows have most increased, the 'richest joys' of grace have been mercifully imparted. Christ has been specially present to help. I am sure that He has taken a firmer hold on my heart than ever. My soul clings not to the things of earth. Yet there is much within me that needs to be rectified. Lord, remove whatever is offensive in thy sight."

"August 30, 1860.—I have often found it profitable, when tempted, to look back on the path along which the Lord has led me. The memoranda which I have made have proved useful. They have assisted me to recall the feelings experienced and purposes made under similar trials; and the deliverances wrought out on my behalf. I have thus been encouraged to place my trust in my covenant keeping God, and have been stimulated to be faithful in the trying hour. At times, of late, I have experienced much peace and joy in believing, and, at other times, I have been much cast down. Sometimes I have been painfully anxious respecting my future path. The other morning this *was the case*. But I was enabled to commit myself

more fully to the Lord, begging Him to do with me what seemed good in his sight.

“It seems probable that I shall be engaged in tuition. If so, how much shall I need to be taught of God ! I must cry to Him for heavenly wisdom. I feel it a solemn thought that, to some extent, I shall be responsible for the present and eternal welfare of the children who may be placed in my charge. Blessed Lord, help me that I may be faithful.”

CHAPTER VII.

LEARNING TO TEACH.

“ My blessed Master ! it is sweet
To bring my burden, all complete
And lay it gently at thy feet.

O wondrous love ! I thought to lay,
The galling burden of to-day
Just at thy feet, and come away.

But thou has whispered words of cheer,
And whispered in my heavy ear,
Oh, thou of little faith, draw near.

Thou giv'st me bread from heaven to eat,
And bid'st me tarry at thy feet,
And slak'st my thirst with cordials sweet.”

WHILE Miss D. was in her seventeenth year she took a situation as governess. Until the close of her eighteenth year she was employed in this form of teaching, though not the whole of the time in the same family. As might be supposed she deeply felt her need of the special help of God at this time. Her mind was sensitively acquainted with the solemn responsibility of her position, and with her own inexperience.

Every young person, in such a situation, is in need of all the sympathy and aid which can be rendered to *them by the senior members of the family.* Happy is

it if they are thus favoured, and if they have such fellowship with God as ensures Divine strength and direction. Whilst a governess is yet in her teens her position in the family is somewhat peculiar. She must be entrusted with considerable authority, yet she can scarcely be expected to be prepared to employ that authority at all times so wisely as she would after a few years experience. The pupils entrusted to her care must be made to understand that they are to yield obedience to her, yet it may be difficult at all times to ensure this obedience when it would be unhesitatingly yielded to a parent, though the direction given was precisely the same. The position of a young person employed as governess must be one of mingled authority and subordination, and is neither easy to define nor maintain. All concerned must use whatever good sense they have, in order to gain all the advantage from the relationship which may be derived and is exceedingly desirable.

Miss Sophia found need for all the grace, and sense, and watchfulness, and patience which she could command. Often was her mind greatly depressed. She felt painfully that she was not effecting all the good she desired to effect, and which she had hoped to accomplish. Her very conscientiousness was, at times, in danger of becoming morbid, and the occasion of needless distress. Whilst those concerned were, in their own minds, commending her fidelity, and admiring her tact, and pleased with her success, she was mourning over weaknesses and failures, and not unfrequently weeping in secret before her God. One *circumstance* of somewhat ordinary kind, with which *Miss Sophia* was acquainted, may be mentioned

under assumed names, as illustrating the sort of difficulties with which she had to contend, and which formed part of the gracious discipline employed for her instruction and benefit.

The scene is a farm-house. The mistress of the house a woman of good-sense, and kindly intentions, and earnestly desiring the welfare of her children, but not of vigorous health, and wanting in the firmness, and wisdom which are essential to the training of children. She does, however, on most occasions, sustain the authority of a youthful governess whom she has engaged to instruct her children. The master of the house is chiefly engaged in his own pursuits and pleasures, and quite disposed to gratify his children when they happen to be near him unless their gratification would interfere with his own. The discipline exercised by the parents is, by them, supposed to be what is best for the children. Rewards and punishments succeed each other. Indulgence and sternness are blended in what may be regarded as moderate quantity. But the discipline, really, is far from judicious. The conduct of the children is reckoned good or evil chiefly as it happens to be pleasant or otherwise to the parents. Falsehood, wilful and deliberate, has been rebuked only, and that with no great amount of severity. The offence of making a noise, at a time when such noise was specially annoying to the father, has been punished by stripes with a riding whip. Poor Mr. and Mrs. X., chiefly the former, are sadly blundering over the training of their children, but expect great things to be effected by the girl in her teens whom they have engaged as governess.

This young lady is engaged one forenoon in the

instruction of her pupils. Among these is a boy whom we will call Fred. It has been arranged by Mr. and Mrs. X. that Fred shall go to school when he is twelve years old. But he will not attain that mature age for a long time to come. So for the present he is to receive instruction with his sisters. Perhaps daily intercourse with the girls, and the constant supervision of an educated and gentle young lady may tend to soften his manners. On the morning in question Master Fred has read his lesson in a manner which has given entire satisfaction to himself; and, although it is only half-past ten, he demands, as a reward for his performance, an immediate release from the school room, and an exemption from all farther tasks for the present. He urged as an additional plea that he had been accustomed to do so during the time of a previous governess.

Miss A—— however did not see the force of this reasoning. The other children were about to form a little class as usual for mental arithmetic, and Freddy was desired to take his place among them. He replied: "I'm going down stairs." "No, Freddy, you must come and join the others." "Then," said the young hero, "I shall sit on the desk." In a moment he had sprang to the position mentioned, planting himself on the lid with a defiant air, and adding, "Now, go on with the arithmetic, for I want to be off."

"No, Freddy," was the reply, "we shall not proceed with the lesson whilst you are there. Come down, and sit at the table like a good boy."

"I shant." This was said in a low tone, but with a determined manner.

"Now, Freddy dear, you do not wish to displease

me. Would you rather sit there and grieve me, or come and sit at the table with your sisters, and so please me?"

The boy's face manifested considerable emotion. It seemed as though he would allow the sense of right within him to prevail. But self-will had often been indulged; and, by triumphing, had become strong. After an evident struggle within, he said, "No."

Miss A—— waited some little time, whilst the other children arranged themselves in their proper places at the table, hoping that the youngster's foolish determination would be overcome. But in this she was disappointed. After a lengthened pause he said very resolutely: "I'll away down stairs." To this his governess replied, "No, Freddy, you will do nothing of the kind. You know what I have directed you to do."

"I'll look out of the window, and see what they are doing there." So saying Master Fred sprang from the desk, knocking his little brother over in his rapid and unexpected movement, and jumped upon a chair in order to look out of the window which was rather higher.

The youthful and inexperienced governess was greatly distressed and much perplexed. She was unwell, and needed gentle sympathy rather than such treatment. It was with difficulty that she could refrain from weeping. She saw, however, that something must be done. She succeeded in controlling her feelings and restraining the tears. She then dismissed the other children, giving them directions how to employ their time. When they had left the room she spoke to the foolish boy as tenderly and firmly as she could,

employing all the arguments she could think of to induce him to submit. He was, however, unyielding.

"Your ma will be grieved to know you have been so naughty."

"I want to go down stairs."

"No, you cannot go down at present. You must finish your lessons. I hope you will do so cheerfully, and at once. Do you know, Freddy, that I had begun to think you liked to please me. You have kindly brought me my letters from the village, and taken messages. I hoped that you loved me, and found a pleasure in pleasing me. Let me now see that it is so."

"Will you promise that I shall go down stairs as soon as I have done the arithmetic?"

"No, I cannot make any such promise. It would not be right in me to do so. Your parents are very anxious that you should improve."

"May I go down at eleven o'clock?"

"I cannot say that you may. If you do your best, you will be at liberty before twelve. But I can make no promise. I must see you attend to your task."

"Then I shall go down directly. I want to go to see the sheep."

"Stay in this room, Master Fred, until I return."

"May be I sha'nt."

Miss A—— then proceeded to take counsel with the mother. She saw the importance of the crisis. It was arranged that the self-willed lad should remain in the school-room until two o'clock, unless meanwhile he relented, and acknowledged his fault, and promised to behave better for the future. The governess retired to her bed-room near to the school-room, to weep and pray. She felt the responsibility of her position, and

dreaded that any want of firmness, or of kindness, might injure the child. In delicate health herself, far from her own friends, convinced that there was no help to be derived from Mr. X., and only a passive support from Mrs. X., the youthful teacher was perplexed and depressed. Besides she had begun to love the children dearly, and to be deeply interested in their zeal and abiding welfare. Her prayers, however, were answered. The child was brought to submission. There was reason to hope that something was done towards the right training of that wayward mind. At any rate he for once yielded to rightful authority, and loved her all the more who enforced it. In a short time afterward he made her some trifling present, such as a child could of its own will provide, and esteemed it a favour that the present was accepted.

With this circumstance Miss Sophia was acquainted, and it may serve to represent trials with which she had herself to meet; and the patience, and tact, and affection, which she herself manifested.

The children of one family where she resided as governess were one evening conversing respecting her. The subject was that of temper. They were endeavouring to look back on the past since Miss Denham had been entrusted with their education in order to settle the question: had she ever been vexed? Like many older people they found their chief perplexity arose from a want of some clear definition of terms. They were not thoroughly agreed as to what *vexedness* really was. They at length put the question to their governess herself. "Miss D. have you ever been vexed with us since you came to live here?" She told them that she was sorry to say that she had sometimes been

grieved with them, and reminded them how they had at times been detained in the school-room, or had extra tasks, or had, in other ways, been punished for bad behaviour; and also how she had reproved them for their faults when no further punishment was deemed necessary. They heard all this, yet were not fully satisfied on the point in dispute. That state of feeling of which Miss D. had spoken was not exactly the *vexedness* of which they had thought.

The very next day one of the little girls was naughty, and Miss Sophia reproved her. It suddenly occurred to one of the others that here was a case in point, which had better not be lost sight of. Nothing like actual instances. When the governess was silent, the little boy inquired: "Miss D. are you vexed with sister?" "Yes. I am very grieved with her. She has been very thoughtless and naughty."

The boy smiled, and said, "Is that your vexedness? You should have seen Miss Q! I vexed her one day, and she said: "You've never seen me in a bad temper." But we thought her temper bad enough for anything. Well, we see what your *vexedness* is."

Miss Sophia's views and feelings at the time may, perhaps be best discerned by one or two brief extracts. To her brother she writes,

"August 27, 1862.

I am no better of my home sickness. At times I feel as unsettled as on the first day I spent here, though I have been half a quarter. I am very lonely as Mrs. P—— has been from home, and the children are too young for companions. Perhaps my solitary condition is for my advantage, as I am *constrained* to take all my cares and sorrows to God, and

to pray more than perhaps I otherwise should have done. Do pray for me, dear brother. I need much grace in order to train these dear children aright. I have been led to plead especially for W. H. that he may be truly converted. Sometimes I hope that the Holy Spirit is striving with him.

Five weeks of the twenty one are gone already. Let us try to make good use of the remainder. I have felt Jesus to be very precious to me of late. I do long to do his will, where He has appointed me, and to glorify Him. May He help us both to live to his honour, and to keep close to his side, 'Howe'er life's varied current flow.'

Believe me, my own precious brother,

Your loving sister."

"August 27, 1862.

My dearest sister,

I have just received yours, and as I have a few minutes to spare before dinner, I will give them to you. . . . I never before so thoroughly realized my own weakness. I do feel that all my strength is in God. Every spare moment of late I have spent in his presence. I have been constrained to hasten to His feet, and prostrate before Him in my chamber. I have wept and prayed. Especially have I cried to Him for help in the discharge of the duties now laid on me, and that he would convert the souls of the dear children. I think that God does hear my feeble prayers, so far as to send the influences of the Holy

Spirit into the hearts of the children. The excitement of one day made me ill all the week. Yet the promise was applied : 'My grace is sufficient for thee.' On Sunday morning the text was : 'I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears, behold I will heal thee.' The text did me much good."

CHAPTER VIII.

TAUGHT WHILST TEACHING.

“ ‘A little while,’ for patient vigil-keeping,
To face the stern, to wrestle with the strong:
‘A little while,’ to sow the seed with weeping,
Then bind the sheaves, and sing the harvest song.

‘A little while,’ the earthen pitcher taking
To wayside brooks, from far off fountains fed,
Then the cool lip its thirst for ever slaking
Beside the fulness of the Fountain-head.

‘A little while,’ to keep the oil from failing
‘A little while,’ faith’s flickering lamps to trim;
And then, the Bridegroom’s coming footsteps hailing,
To haste to meet Him with the bridal hymn.

And He, who is Himself the Gift and Giver,—
The future glory, and the present smile,
With the bright promise of the glad ‘for ever,’
Will light the shadows of the ‘little while.’”

IN January, 1863, Miss D. opened a school at Masbrough. She had just completed her eighteenth year. The place selected as the scene of her future exertions is not distinguished by much beauty of appearance, or external attractions of any sort. But there seemed to be a providential opening; and she would have the opportunity of living with her uncle and aunt (Mr. and Mrs. Widdison) whom she greatly loved, and who regarded her with strong affection.

Miss D. entered on her new duties with the same ardour, and conscientiousness, and prayerfulness, which she had previously manifested. Her purpose was to do all in her power that the children entrusted to her care should be well fitted for the engagements of their future lives, and that they should be led to the Saviour without delay. She fully believed that, in the highest sense, it was possible to make the most of two worlds, and it was her daily aim that her pupils should be led to perceive this, and act accordingly.

It would, however, be altogether foreign to the purpose of this life-sketch to enter into the details of school life as conducted by Miss D. Nor, perhaps, would it be very interesting to the general reader to know by what slow degrees, and repeated efforts, and kind allurements, and patient endurance, "line upon line, precept upon precept," Miss D. succeeded in securing a permanent place for the multiplication table within the memories of certain little girls; and imparted to them some notion of the use of grammar; and the distinction between possessive adjective pronouns, and personal pronouns of the possessive case; and aided, one after another, in acquiring a power over the keys of the piano. In all this she spared no pains.

We have more to do with the concern she manifested for the spiritual welfare of the children. The earnestness, deep, and quiet, and spiritual, which she felt, and the abounding and unfailing love which they could not but perceive, gave to Miss D. a power over the girls almost marvellous. Besides, she was always *planning how she could most fully use her influence for good, and endeavouring, in all possible ways, to*

commend to them as their best friend, the Saviour who was so precious to her own soul.

The conversations which she had with the girls soon resulted in considerable religious impressions on the minds of several of them. Miss D. then invited those of them who were so disposed to meet her one evening in the week for special attention to spiritual things. At those meetings they were invited to make known their difficulties and desires. They were also encouraged to pray 'with each other, and for each other. Miss D., of course, endeavoured to give them suitable advice, and prayed with them. Had there not been much tenderness, real affection, and considerable tact on the part of Miss D., such meetings could scarcely have been made pleasant to little girls, at an age when playfulness and fun are chiefly desired. But God so blessed the zealous endeavours of the teacher that the children, without losing the relish for the innocent and beneficial sports of childhood, found a special delight in these meetings for religious converse and prayer. The attendance was always absolutely voluntary, and the regularity with which the children availed themselves of the opportunity thus afforded made their delight therein apparent. How great the benefit thus derived will never be fully understood until the great day.

Among the loving devices employed by Miss D. to secure the affectionate confidence of the girls, and at the same time, become better acquainted with their various needs, so that she might give them suitable advice, was that of writing to them, and requesting them, individually, to write to her. She wisely thought *that many questions would be asked in this manner, to*

which utterance would never be given by the lips. She might, thus, be enabled to remove some obstacle from before the feet of those who wished to reach the Saviour ; or might shed some ray of light on the path of a little perplexed pilgrim. It may be said that little girls were not likely to be induced to enter into such correspondence. There are, however, now laid on the table of the writer, many letters sent to Miss D. by her pupils. Some of these were written by the seniors in her little school, and some by the juniors. Some have evidently been written with considerable care, whatsoever the ability of the child, as though the thought that, "Teacher will read it," was present to the mind. Others have been written, with no regard to penmanship, the subject engrossing the entire attention. Some are in pencil, and others would serve as favourable specimens of caligraphy. But in all it is apparent that the child had begun to think about her soul, had a desire to love the Saviour, and doubted not the kindly purpose of her teacher. Miss D., during the vacations or at other times, when she was absent from her scholars wrote to them, and also on other occasions. To some a copy of a few of the letters thus written by Miss D. may be interesting, as the correspondence did much in strengthening the hold she had on the affections of the children. We therefore subjoin a selected number.

"My very dear children,

You will, I suppose, be looking out for a letter from me. I must, therefore, endeavour to write one, though, just now, I really feel more disposed to admire *the beauties* of nature than to use my pen. Everything *around seems* lovely, bright, and happy. Even the

very trees, moved by the gentle breeze, seem as if, in waving, they tried to praise God. Then it is pleasing to watch the little insects, invigorated by the warmth of the sun, enjoying their short existence. The bees do not forget to improve the hours as they swiftly pass, and the little ants, from whom you know we are to learn to be industrious, are busy and gladsome. Everything around appears to be praising God, and shall not we join them? Yes, my dear children, we will praise him too. I do not mean that we must merely say that he is good. We must thank him with all our hearts. If we are really grateful we shall shew that we are so. There will be neither murmuring nor discontented looks. Not that we are to spend all our time in talking of the goodness of God. The birds praise him by building their nests, feeding their young, and singing their sweet songs, as he has appointed. The fishes have no nests to build, nor voices to tune. But they do his will, and so praise him, as they swim about beneath the cool water, or rise near the surface to enjoy the glorious sunshine. You have all seen how innocent, and harmless, and happy the young lambs are. None of these really know the God, who made them, but they accomplish his purposes and enjoy his bounty. Let us be grateful as they seem to be. Whilst you enjoy the fine weather, run about to get strength, inhale fresh life from the pure air, and gather the pretty flowers of which you are so fond, never forget God. Let every one see that no evil tempers prevent you being as happy as the birds and insects, and let them hear that you have a voice to proclaim his praise, as well as a heart to feel his goodness.

I have also been thinking as I watched the various objects rejoicing in the sunshine. Everything in nature appears to be made brighter and more cheerful by the shining of the sun. Ought not we to desire the beams of the Sun of Righteousness to shine upon our souls. That sunshine will make us blessed indeed. We shall greatly rejoice if we largely partake of that gift. I have been ready to wonder how we could ever be unhappy or discontented whilst enjoying the sweet smile of Jesus. Let us think more of the blessed Saviour, and endeavour to walk more closely with him.

Then we shall really enjoy the earthly blessings provided for our use. Surely no one has such cause to be happy as the believer. Looking around on all the beauties and glories of creation, he feels that he has a special claim on them. He can 'lift to heaven the unpresumptuous eye, and say, my Father made them all.'

May we all be enabled to overcome the world, and ever enjoy the testimony that we please God.

I am, my dear children,

Your affectionate friend,

SOPHIA D. DENHAM."

"My very dear children,

My letter this week will be more especially on the subject of a good character. You all know what I mean by this, so I need not stay to explain. I feel very, very anxious that you should all form the determination to serve God fully, and with all your powers. You have seen, in some garden, a great difference among trees or plants growing very near to each other. One tree shall be lofty and vigorous, and, according to

the season, covered with blossom or fruit, whilst another tree, at no great distance, shall be dwarfed and feeble, and have neither blossom nor fruit upon it during the twelve months. You have seen a plant which you greatly admired because of the greenness of the leaves, and the beauty and fragrance of the flowers, whilst close to it was a plant in which there was very little to admire. I greatly desire that you may become like the plant covered all over with flowers, and the tree laden with fruit.

The Psalmist prayed, 'That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.' (Psalm cxliv. 12.)

I want you to become polished stones in the temple of God. You must not be like rough stones just hewed out in the quarry, or such as we sometimes see lying near the road side. Some Christians resemble these rough stones, and other Christians are like the polished stones. Both are Christians; as stones are stones, whatever their condition. You can, however, readily perceive the great advantage which the polished has over the rough. We should not regard it as proper to take a misshapen block from the quarry, and place it, without any further preparation, in a conspicuous place in some beautiful temple. Every passer-by would say, 'That stone is out of its place. It ought either to have been prepared, or never put there.'

Now when we are converted we are like stones which have been dug out of the quarry. We, henceforth, belong to the Lord. But we have not yet been made fully meet for the Master's use. We must seek,

by frequent and intimate communion with him, to gain a complete fitness for his service. Unless we attend to this we shall never become eminently useful. You see what I mean. So long as there are many imperfections in us, and inconsistencies in our behaviour, there will be little use in our urging religion on the attention of others. They will be ready to think, and perhaps to say, 'in what has it improved you?'

Nor shall we become fitted for any important position in God's service. All would discern that we were unsuitable for the duties and responsibilities of the position. We should not fit the place. The rough points in our character would stand out, and quite spoil the look of the building.

I wish that I could shew you, as clearly as I desire, the full importance of being really in earnest, thorough Christians. Your character must be such that all who know you will feel certain that, under all circumstances, you will be found doing that which is right.

But in order that you may become such Christians, it is needful that you should always do what is right, and so form good habits. Make it a rule *always* to do that which, after prayer, you believe to be right. There must be *no* exception. If you now do wrong, evil habits will be formed and strengthened; and, after a time, you will scarcely know when you are doing wrong, and it will become almost impossible to alter your evil course.

Always endeavour to 'let your light shine before men, that they seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.'

Yours faithfully,

S. DENHAM."

“ My very dear young friends,

It is impossible for me to describe the feelings with which I am now writing to you. First, and greatest, is, I trust, devout gratitude to my heavenly Father for having begun a good work in so many of your hearts. Oh, my dear children, it is no small blessing to have been led to see your need of a Saviour; but it is a still greater favour to have been taught by the Spirit of God, concerning the way to Jesus. You have learned that there is a way of escape for perishing sinners. There is a ‘new and living way’ by which guilty and polluted transgressors, like ourselves, may approach unto God. The Lord Jesus Christ has borne our punishment, and given to penitent believers boldness of access into the holiest of all.

Those of you whom God in his abundant mercy has led so far, will join me in saying—

‘Should the fleeting remnant of our days,
Be every moment occupied in praise ;
Should we throughout time’s race the task pursue,
Yet would the joyful theme be ever new.’

This subject is so pleasing that I hardly know how to leave it. But for your advantage I turn to another. Mingling with my great joy there is a degree of fear. I have an anxiety concerning you which often leads me to the throne of grace, there to plead with God on your behalf. Frequently have I asked that the strength which comes from on high, the supporting influences of the Holy Spirit may indeed be yours.

Satan, our great adversary, watches every opportunity to injure the Lord’s flock. He goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Especial

does he strive to seize the tender lambs of the fold. My dear children, keep near to the Good Shepherd. Whilst you do so, he will watch over you and protect you. So you will be safe. Ever, oh, ever keep near to Jesus.

‘Close by his side still may we keep,
Howe’er life’s various current flow ;
With stedfast eye mark every step,
And follow thee where’er thou go.’

In order that you may be enabled to do this, study God’s blessed word. That you know is to be our directory. In it we learn our Lord’s will concerning us. The Psalmist says, ‘Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.’ So must we, having sought, earnestly and prayerfully, that our eyes might be opened to see the wonders contained in God’s law, study that word until it becomes our delight and safety. ‘O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day.’ ‘Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than all my teachers.’ ‘Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.’

There is one chapter to which I wish to direct your especial attention, *i. e.*, 1 Corinthians xiii, where the Apostle says, ‘And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three: but the greatest of these is Charity.’ Seek daily, my dear children, to have more and more of this blessed charity. It ‘suffereth long and is kind.’ Bears with those who treat us improperly, and still seeks to do them good, following the example of the meek and lowly Jesus. ‘Envieth not.’ Desires not anything belonging to another, but is pleased that others are happy. ‘Vaunteth not itself, is not puffed

up.' Not ready to think ourselves wiser or holier than others; and if in anything we have been caused to excel, ready, at once and fully, to give all the glory to God. The fifth and two following verses present to us much of the loveliness of the Christian character. We are to believe as much as possible that is good concerning every one. We are to hope the best when appearances are unfavourable. We are to be slow to conclude that evil has been done, or that it was intended if done, hoping against hope that the motives were not so bad as appearances suggest. Read, and prayerfully consider that beautiful and important chapter.

May God give to each of us more of this divine Charity. Many things occur to me that I should like to say to you. I want to help you as you have started in the way to heaven. But I must conclude for the present.

Your loving friend,

S. DENHAM."

" My very dear children,

Last week I wrote to you concerning the necessity of searching the word of God that we may know his will. In no other way can we ascertain what he would have us be and do. By searching God's word I mean something more than merely reading it. We must think about it, and endeavour, by the help of God's Spirit to ascertain its meaning. We shall do well to try to learn all that is meant by any passage of Scripture under our consideration. Would it not be a good plan to fix upon some text, and think about that, when your mind is not engaged in other duties? You

would thus be saved from many idle thoughts which otherwise might occupy your mind, and do you grievous injury.

As I told you before, I am very anxious about you. The prosperity of your souls is so very important, and you are so dear to me, and there are so many enemies to overcome, that I cannot but be very deeply concerned respecting your welfare. I tremble lest any one of you, neglecting to look to Jesus, should fall into sin, and so grieve that Holy Spirit by whom you have been 'sealed unto the day of redemption.'

I would not discourage you by thus referring to the foes whom you must encounter in the way to heaven. There is no need that you should despond. Though your enemies are numerous and mighty, like the tall sons of Anak, of whom the children of Israel stood in fear, you need not be terrified. The God of Abraham was able to accomplish the promises He had made concerning Israel; and you have One who is well able to deliver you from every foe, and bring you safely to the promised land. Before the Captain of your salvation all the hosts of hell must flee. You will be safe, only you constantly look to Him for help and obey his directions. Never for one moment trust to your own strength, or think of disobeying his commands.

'Courage, your Captain cries
Who all your toil foreknew,
Toil ye shall have, yet all despise,
I have o'ercome for you.'

One of the temptations to which youthful and inexperienced disciples are especially exposed is the yielding to *spiritual pride*. Whilst but babes in Christ, and

still having much weakness, and many imperfections, they are sometimes ready to fancy themselves better than others. They see, or imagine they see, inconsistencies in their fellow disciples ; they are blind to their own failings, and, hence they are led to regard themselves as pre-eminently holy, and to despise those around them. Beware of this spiritual pride and its attendant uncharitableness. It is very possible that those whom we regard as inconsistent meant well in what they did ; and certainly we shall gain more advantage from detecting our own failings that we may amend them. If we become blind to our faults and quick-sighted to those of others we shall be a hinderance to many to whom we might have been a blessing, besides displeasing God and bringing darkness upon our own souls.

On the other hand some are unduly disposed to doubt the reality of the work of grace in their own hearts, and so yield to discouragement, and cease to strive. Because they are tempted to do wrong, and the temptations are frequent and powerful, they are ready to think that they have never been converted at all ; and that, at any rate, they can never be made perfect in love. Such have need to think much of God's mercy in Christ Jesus, and earnestly plead with the Lord that He would speak comfort to their hearts, and extend the work of grace within them.

We must constantly look to Jesus as our Saviour, and ever cast ourselves upon the merits of his sacrifice. Whilst so doing we can scarcely yield to spiritual pride, or to despair. Whilst we glory in the cross of Christ, vain glory and despondency, will be alike excluded.

Another difficulty which I know some of you have already experienced, arises from the unkindness of the unsaved around you. We cannot altogether avoid being affected by the expressed opinions of those with whom we are, more or less, associated. You must prepare for some amount of opposition from the world. Some of your acquaintances may laugh at you because of your profession of religion, or may call you by nicknames, or may misrepresent your conduct so as to make it appear very ridiculous. This small kind of persecution is not pleasant. Perhaps you have already found it difficult to feel kindly towards those who are acting unkindly towards you. But you must try, and Jesus will help you. Ever remember that he can, and does, sympathise with you. Think also of the privileges which you enjoy as Christ's disciples, to which those are strangers who scoff at you. Pray that they may be led to seek and find the great salvation.

Others may speak lightly of your religious profession, not from dislike to religion itself, but because they do not think that you have really attained the blessing. When you have reason to know that such are their views, it will be well to examine your conduct very carefully, the words you have spoken, and the actions of your life, and the tempers you have manifested, to see if there has been anything therein calculated to make them think unfavourably of you. If you discover such evil, confess it to God, and ask him to help you to do better for the future. If you are unable to discover anything that has been wrong, *tell the Lord Jesus how painfully you feel the suspicion cherished by some concerning you. Tell him that it*

grieves you that any should doubt your love to him. But do not be angry with those who are thus needlessly suspicious of you. Any manifestation of evil temper would only serve to confirm their unfavourable opinion, whilst it would be displeasing to Christ. Tell him all about your trouble, and he will impart suitable comfort to you.

‘ Watched by the world’s malignant eye,
Who load us with reproach and shame ;
As servants of the Lord Most High,
As zealous for his glorious Name,
We ought in all his paths to move,
With holy fear and humble love.

That wisdom, Lord, on us bestow,
From every evil to depart ;
To stop the mouth of every foe,
While, upright both in life and heart,
The proofs of godly fear we give,
And show them how the Christians live !’

Very earnestly do I wish that you may thus adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour, enjoy his continual smile, and at length be received to dwell with him for ever.

Yours affectionately,
S. DENHAM.”

“ My dear children,

Last week we were considering some of the difficulties which beset the path of youthful pilgrims to Mount Zion. Perhaps we shall derive advantage from noticing a few others. It is well to be thoroughly acquainted with the various ways in which the Adversary seeks to prevent the progress of those who have

set their faces towards the New Jerusalem. By knowing how the Deceiver has injured, or endeavoured to injure those who have preceded us, we may happily escape harm when he approaches us as 'an Angel of light.'

The Tempter often strives to deceive, in order that he may destroy. He will try to lead us wrong even when we are specially seeking to do right; and will, if on our part there be any unwatchfulness, add a mixture of evil to that which we are accounting good.

If, for instance, we have overcome our timidity and shame so far as to speak a few words for our Lord, in the reproof of sin, or the commending our Saviour; the Tempter will try to persuade us that we have done something very clever, or have been more faithful than other disciples. Thus he would mar our service by vain-glory and pride.

At other times we may be tempted to do evil that good may come. This may always be discerned to be a temptation. To disobey God must always be wrong. If we are solicited to do anything which is opposed to the revealed will of God, whatever the plea, and how pleasant soever the results expected to follow, there ought to be no hesitation whatever on our part. We may be well assured that our duty is to decline most firmly and promptly. We must determine at once to do so, and cry to God for help to maintain our fidelity.

For instance, some one of your schoolfellows, or acquaintances, may ask you to say that which is not true, or to equivocate, or at least to conceal part of *the truth* when you are understood to be stating the *whole*. They request you to act in this manner in

order to screen them from rebuke or punishment, on account of their misdoing. Well, you know that any departure from the law of truth is wrong, and would be inconsistent with your profession of discipleship. But you are very wishful to oblige, and very unwilling that any of your associates should suffer pain if you can lawfully prevent their doing so. The Adversary may suggest that if you act as they request your religion will be commended. You will appear to them as amiable and kindly disposed. They will be ready to conclude that your religion has made you more tender-hearted and obliging. Thus your influence over those concerned will be increased, and may, afterwards, on many occasions be employed for their good. Perhaps you will thus be enabled to lead them to the Saviour. It may also be suggested that, on the other hand, if you refuse their request, and your testimony because of its strict truthfulness, leads to the discovery of their wrong doing, they will be ready to think you very unkind. Nay, it is not unlikely that they will blame your religion. They may say, with some plausibility, 'She would not have acted thus before the time when they say she was converted. Either she is a hypocrite and has no religion, or her religion has made her less kindly disposed than she was without it. Many a girl who makes no profession, would have stretched a little, and kept me out of trouble. I dislike religion which prevents those who have it from doing a friend a good turn.'

Now in all this there is much that is plausible. It may seem, at the first hasty glance, as though it was right. *But it is not right, and no good will result from what is wrong.* This sacrifice of principle will

increase your influence over your associates. They will not respect you for so acting, and will, most likely, despise you. They will, of course, be pleased at the time to be screened at the expense of your conscience. But, how do you suppose they will regard you when you next urge them to yield their hearts to the Saviour? They will certainly remember your sinful compliance with their desire. Most likely the secret thought of their heart will be, 'No, I will never become a hypocrite such as she is.' Perhaps they will say so to you, with more or less bitterness as you may have pleased or displeased them at the time. Thus all your influence over them for good will have been lost.

Let us ever remember that the unsaved observe our inconsistencies, and lose confidence in us, however they may choose to flatter us. They will often, thoughtlessly, seek to lead us to do what is wrong. Sometimes they will, deliberately, do all in their power to induce us to walk in some forbidden path. They will affirm that they see no harm in the conduct they recommend. But they will despise us if they succeed in their attempt. On the other hand they are sure, finally, to respect consistency and firmness of principle, wherever they see it. If we refuse compliance with their wishes we may expect them to be displeased. If they regard our religion as the occasion of their disappointment, they will, most likely reproach us on account of our religion. But, at the very time, they will, in their hearts, admire the grace given to us, which makes us courageous in the service of God. They will wish that they also were bold to do right.

We must, however, under such circumstances as these, be specially careful to cultivate and manifest a

kind and generous spirit. We must shew them that we are ready to do anything for them which is not actually wrong. They will then see that our refusal in the case which annoys them does not spring from selfishness or want of affection, nor from a wish to make it appear that we are better than other people.

In order that we may thus act aright when tried in this manner, we must gain much true lowliness of heart. The Apostle Paul warns us against 'voluntary humility,' and a 'shew of wisdom in will worship.' (Col. ii. 18, 23.) We are not to make a display of our goodness and humility. The holier we are, the less ostentatious we shall be in the performance of what is right. There is always a wrong motive within our hearts, and influencing our will, when we feel disappointed that so few, or perhaps none, know that we have been doing what we regard as praiseworthy. We must be satisfied to gain the approval of the gracious Master we serve. Our Heavenly Father seeth in secret, and his smile is worth all beside. 'Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.' (Col. iii. 23, 24.)

We shall thus secure that blessed peace which is one of the priceless privileges of true believers. The peace of God shall rule in our hearts. We shall be kept in perfect peace, our minds being stayed upon God. We shall not then be annoyed by trifles. Most likely we can recollect being put out of temper by some very trifling disappointment. We have had, at times, little happiness ourselves, and have done

to promote the happiness of those around us. We have wondered at ourselves how we could be made so peevish about trifles, yet we have continued to be so. Those who have strong confidence in God, and much love towards him are not so easily annoyed. They expect to meet with those trials, but the peace of God keeps their hearts and minds. They derive such rich and abundant supplies from God, that they are not likely to be distressed greatly when some secondary source of comfort fails. They cannot be made miserable by the drying up of some little earthly rivulet, because they have free and constant access to the river whose streams make glad the city of God. They go on their way rejoicing, and praising God. They do service to the Master they love with gladness and singleness of heart. Those who know them best admire the grace of God which makes them so loving and happy.

May we all, my very dear children, thus glorify God. I cannot tell you how thankful I am that you have, thus early, been led to Christ. Deeply do I feel the force of the Apostle's language, (Col. i. 9-14.) 'For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness: giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints

in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.'

O that such blessedness may be yours and mine.
Is it not worth striving after with all our heart?

I remain,

Yours faithfully,

SOPHIA D. DENHAM."

CHAPTER IX.

LESSONS OF VARIOUS KINDS.

"If on our daily course, our mind
Be set to hallow all we find,
New treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.

Old friends, old scenes, will lovelier be,
As more of heaven in each we see :
Some softening gleam of love and prayer
Shall dawn on every cross and care.

The trivial round, the common task,
Would furnish all we ought to ask ;
Room to deny ourselves ; a road
To bring us, daily, nearer God."

MISS DENHAM's mind was naturally contemplative and emotional, and, after her early conversion, became eminently devotional. In the case of such persons there is a danger that the character should not be fully developed. In many instances, whilst some excellencies have been very distinctly marked, others have been almost wanting. The dispositions, which, under favourable circumstances, have led really good people to the hermit's cell, or the monastery, or some place of undue seclusion, still exist; and, unless guarded, will retard or prevent the full growth of Christian character. In some instances, in modern *days, and ordinary English Society, the improvement*

of the mind has been, at least partially, neglected; or the social tendencies have been unduly restrained; or even the tasks appertaining to the family circle, have been reluctantly and imperfectly performed, by those who really loved the Saviour, but whose views needed enlargement by a careful study of the whole Bible. Sophia Denham had, whilst a child, been taught to examine God's truth in its completeness. Her diligent search for true wisdom in the great storehouse imparted considerable enlargement to her views and character.

Sophia tenderly loved those who were most nearly allied to her. Many were the manifestations of affection borne by her to her sister and brother. Numerous letters from her to each of these much-loved ones are now carefully cherished and greatly prized. But, of course, the contents are for the most part chiefly interesting to those concerned. Letters which should, as a whole, be suitable for publication, would scarcely be appropriate between those who loved each other as Sophia and her sister and brother. There was too much heartfelt confidence among them, and an assurance of sympathy in small things, joyous or sorrowful, to allow of their letters being what strangers should largely meddle with. We will rest satisfied with such extracts which have already been given to shed light on the inner life of our sainted friend. Miss D. regarded her father with mingled love and reverence. Any Christian parent, and especially any Christian minister, might well be grateful to God, if allowed to perceive that his conduct had made such an impression on the mind of his children, as Sophia's *mind had received from the daily life of her father.*

Sophia's affection for her father was unbounded; and she ever regarded his conduct and disposition as worthy of her earnest imitation. At the same time it gave her great delight to do anything which would promote his comfort. She sympathized with him in the frequent pain, and constant feebleness, which he experienced at the time she entered on her duties at Masbro', and sought, in every possible way, to solace him in his comparative retirement. We may venture to subjoin an extract from a letter sent by Sophia to her father on his birthday. The rhymes at least make apparent the affection subsisting between the parent and child.

To my Father on his Birthday.

“Again, my much-loved father dear,
 We hail the season of the year
 When we are wont with happy mind
 Some little birthday gift to find.
 Though, for a time, heaven's wise decree
 Hath parted far your children three,
 Yet all with joyful hearts unite
 In praises to the God of light,
 That in his kind and tender care
 Your life he hath been pleased to spare;
 That we might in your love rejoice
 And profit by your good advice.
 Oh, that he may vouchsafe us power,
 To glorify him ev'ry hour,
 That while on earth you yet remain
 We never more may cause you pain.
 May all our speech and conduct show
 That well the way of life we know,
 And love the narrow path to tread,
 In which your godly teachings led:
 And thank the gracious God of heaven,
 For having such a father given,

By walking in the steps he trod,
 And serving faithfully his God.
 When earth and time have passed away
 In the last, great, momentous day,
 When we, within the happy land,
 Before our gracious Saviour stand,
 And see the saints all gathered there,
 The untold joys of heaven to share,
 May many from that crowd arise
 On whom you'll gaze with glad surprise ;
 And list delighted while they tell
 How God, through you, did save from hell.
 And brought them to that happy place
 To swell their great Redeemer's praise.
 Your grateful song shall louder be
 Throughout a vast eternity.
 Your harp of gold wake sweeter strains
 For ever in the heavenly plains.
 And yours shall be a crown of light,
 Whose jewels shine with lustre bright,
 By Jesus Christ himself bestowed
 On those who many turn to God.
 We pray that you may long be spared
 To us for whom you have so cared.
 All comforts be for you prepared,
 And by our dear mamma be shared.
 But now I must indeed conclude,
 Assured that what is right and good
 Our Saviour will himself bestow
 And crown his grace with glory too."

Though Miss D. regarded the cultivation of the heart as of paramount importance, and would not willingly allow anything in herself, or the employment of her time, which would tend to draw away her heart from her Lord; and though, as we have just seen, she tenderly loved her father, and those closely allied to her, and was delighted to employ leisure moments in any way which would minister to their gratification, she did not undervalue the importance of

mental cultivation. She earnestly desired to improve her mind, and amid her many schemes and engagements tending to promote the spiritual welfare of those around her, she found time to add something to her mental stores.

In the improvement of the mind most depends on personal determination, and diligence, and patience. Other people may do much towards furnishing our houses. A rich man may have his residence fitted up in the most desirable manner, although he knows nothing concerning the formation of a chair, or a carpet, or a piano. He may be utterly ignorant concerning sculpture and painting. He may be absolutely incapable of making any one of the hundreds of articles necessary to a well furnished house, and he may be too busy or too indolent to master the details required for judging correctly of many of these objects. Yet, if he is rich, and proceeds in accordance with the dictates of common sense, he may have his house respectably furnished. Money, if applied with even moderate discretion, will in such matters accomplish wonders. But money, by no kind of scheming, can be made to furnish a man's mind. He must himself work at every article, for use or ornament, which is to be placed there.

Miss Denham well understood all this, and endeavoured to employ such leisure as her zeal in the cause of Christ left at her disposal, in the earnest and assiduous cultivation of her gifts. But she fully believed that we may be of service to each other in this and all other attempts to get good. Most need the stimulus which association furnishes, and all, at

times, need direction. Weak-minded and indolent people are apt to depend unduly on others, and to imagine nothing can be done unless a class, or group of some sort, has been duly assembled. The self-reliant and recluse are in danger of despising such help as others may offer. Those who are wise will neither rely too much on such aid, nor altogether neglect it.

To a great extent under her guidance, and through her efforts, a class was at this time formed in the neighbourhood where Miss D. resided, entitled "The Masborough Wesleyan Female Mutual Improvement Class." The rules of this class, which are in Miss D.'s handwriting, are brief and characteristic. Perhaps they may save some others a little trouble if inserted.

1st. The Meetings to be held in the School-room, from 8 to 9 o'clock every Thursday evening. *Punctuality essential.*

2nd. Every meeting to commence and conclude with singing and prayer.

3rd. The meetings to begin not later than five minutes past eight, if three members are present.

4th. No one to be admitted as a member of the class unless a member of the Wesleyan Society, nor without the consent of the members of the class.

5th. At the close of each meeting, the chapter to be studied the following meeting to be appointed. The members to read this chapter, during the week, if possible.

6th. All levity to be carefully excluded. The object of the meeting being the intellectual and spiritual improvement of the members, they are urged to pray for the blessing of God.

Another method by which Miss D. endeavoured to

help some of her friends in the cultivation of their minds, and to receive assistance from them at the same time, was by the establishment and maintenance of a small manuscript magazine, the circulation of which was confined to the contributors and their intimate friends. By means of the book-post this unpretending and confidential serial was conveyed to those concerned therein, however distant they might reside from each other. A kindly, and yet somewhat powerful, stimulus was thus given to several young ladies to read, and think, and compose. Though everything was not by this means accomplished which some of the least experienced and most sanguine of the editors might hope for, an impetus was given to them in their laudable endeavours to obtain more knowledge, greater power of thought, and increased aptitude in conveying information to others. Miss D. felt that the mind must be carefully and perseveringly cultivated, in order that the purposes of the gracious Master might be accomplished. In this domain there is no soil so barren as to be unworthy of diligent cultivation. Much that will be worthy of admiration and will prove of essential service may be secured by all who are willing to put forth the required effort. On the other hand there is no favoured plot, anywhere, the resources of which will be fully developed without resolute industry.

Whilst striving to improve the gifts entrusted to her by her Lord, and shedding sunlight upon those who were the nearest allied to her, Miss Sophia possessed and manifested much friendliness of spirit to all with *whom she was associated*. Her disposition was somewhat retiring. Like most persons of studious habits

she had, to some extent, an appearance of reserve. Among those whose hearts were unrenewed, and who were seeking earthly things, and who were unwilling to be drawn towards holier and higher objects, Miss D. found little that was congenial. But, though, to some she might appear reserved, several who had been girls during her girlhood, found in her a wealth of affection. There was no danger of being repulsed if they needed sympathy or counsel in the hour of perplexity and sorrow. As we ventured to illustrate the filial love cherished by Sophia towards her father, by copying part of a birthday composition, it may not be altogether unsuitable to give a portion of a poetical epistle sent to a young lady who enjoyed Miss D.'s confidence and affection. It was composed for the anniversary of the young lady's birth.

“Dear Annie,

On your natal day
Accept from me a simple lay
Which, though its merits be but few,
At least shall be sincere and true.
With all my heart I wish, my dear,
Your welfare in the coming year :
And if our Father's will it be
That you should very many see,
May each be happier, and more blest,
And find you nearer to that rest,
The heaven of perfect joy and love,
The home prepared for us above !
There all God's loving children meet .
To worship at the Saviour's feet ;
Where toil, and pain, and grief are o'er,
And sin, and conflict, known no more.
There we shall God our Father see
And praise throughout eternity.
But, darling, with another year
New cares and duties will appear :

Thorns yet unseen your path will strew
 Fresh tasks be found for you to do :
 Satan will still his arts engage
 The world a constant war will wage :
 And earth its mighty forces bring
 To win your heart from Christ your King.
 But in the word of God we learn
 That all who to their Saviour turn
 Will find him in their hour of need
 A very present help indeed.
 Then, courage, dear, be strong, be brave,
 For Christ, your Lord, will ever save.
 He'll screen, in fierce temptation's hour,
 From sin, the world, and satan's power ;
 Your daily need he will supply,
 And watch with his all-seeing eye
 Your every step, and lead you where
 A path for you he doth prepare.
 Your timid soul he will sustain,
 And ever, till the goal you gain,
 He'll give you daily strength to bear
 Whate'er, in love and tender care,
 His wisdom hath it needful seen
 To give of pain and sorrow keen.
 And when at length you soar away,
 To realms of everlasting day,
 Join in the new and rapturous song
 Which, rising from the blood-washed throng,
 Shall swell the music of the skies,
 And prove accepted sacrifice.
 May I with you, my darling, meet,
 And Christ our dear Redeemer greet.
 Eternity will be too short
 To tell what he for us hath wrought.
 But, lo, I've reached my paper's end,
 So will remain,

Your loving friend,

SOPHIA."

It would not be safe to affirm that Miss D. had
attained an absolute completeness of Christian charac-
ter. But she gave evidence that she was seeking

such completeness with honesty of purpose, and great earnestness and perseverance. She was striving, according to the abundant grace bestowed on her, to become all that God would have her to be, and to accomplish all that God would have her to do. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." The views of religion which Miss D. possessed were large, because her spiritual understanding was strengthened by the word of God. She saw much of what God had provided for his children; she desired the loveliness of character she was taught to see; and she diligently sought to acquire that which seemed so desirable.

CHAPTER X.

TAUGHT THE JOY OF DOING GOOD.

“Work, for time is flying ;
Work with heart sincere ;
Work, for souls are dying ;
Work, for night is near.

In the Master's vineyard
Go and work to-day ;
Be no useless sluggard
Standing in the way.

In the glorious calling
Work till day is o'er ;
Work, till evening falling
You can work no more.

Work, for time is flying,
Christ will soon appear ;
He will hush thy sighing
Thy reward is near !”

Do you delight in your work? If not, we may safely affirm that you have never yet accomplished all that you might have done. It is not only true that others have excelled you; but that which might have been your own achievement far exceeds your actual performance. That you have little or no pleasure in your task may be your misfortune or fault, or may be both. *But, however that question would be decided in a court where sufficient knowledge and strict impartiality*

prevailed, thus much is clear, that there are powers within you which have been but very partially developed. Your nature, mental and physical, is as an estate the resources of which are only known in part. Richer harvests, and hidden stores of wealth, might have gladdened the proprietor; if suitable means had been employed, and sufficient power had been available. Whatever your chief life-task, you have not done therein what you might have accomplished if you had found pleasure in your task.

Miss Denham was taught, while seated at the feet of Jesus, to delight in doing good. Her blessed Master, during his earthly sojourn, "went about doing good." He taught his disciples that they were to be followers of him who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. The Lord Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." We are instructed: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." By his word, and by his gracious Spirit, the Lord Jesus instructs the hearts of his docile and devout disciples to find a holy pleasure in doing good. Such attain great aptitude in blessing those around them, because they delight in doing so. The gifts with which they have been entrusted go far, because they are employed with earnest and joyful good will. They become ingenious in discovering methods of usefulness. As those w

hearts are still under the influence of selfishness frequently display considerable tact in evading manifest duty, and are ever ready with an excuse why they should not spend their money, employ their time, or over exert their influence in that which will bring to them no personal and immediate gain of worldly kind, so those who are largely animated by love to Christ and compassion for the souls for whom the Saviour died, display considerable tact in contriving how they may promote the cause of God more effectually than might, at first sight, seem possible.

We have seen that Miss Denham settled in Masborough early in the year 1863, having just completed her eighteenth year. She was soon engaged in assisting to furnish a bazaar on behalf of the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel at that place. The effort was a very great one for the friends in that neighbourhood. They wished to raise six hundred pounds in order to remove the debt from their chapel. Perhaps few acquainted with the resources of the Methodists at Masborough would have deemed the accomplishment of their plan possible. But the good people threw themselves into the movement with all their soul and might. Among the many willing workers was Sophia Denham. She could work hard: she could give something; she could plead with those who were not as earnest as herself; and she could also employ her pen. Rhymes of considerable length were prepared by Miss D. and assisted in urging onward the movement. Perhaps enough has already been furnished of this form of composition from Miss D.'s pen, or these rhymes *might* have been found of service in other places *on a similar occasion*.

The friends were successful, and the house of God, without any debt whatsoever, stands as a testimony for God in that town. In some respects the neighbourhood may be regarded as one needing special religious culture. Thomas Paine spent some time in Masborough. Most likely his pestilent writings were largely composed in Masborough. Certainly that bad man employed much energy in disseminating his mischievous notions throughout this part of Yorkshire. In this vicinity, for many years after Paine's removal there were assemblages of wicked men, in which blasphemy, infidelity, and vileness were fostered, which would make sinners of ordinary kind to shudder. It would be difficult to shew that the disastrous influence of Paine and his associates has entirely passed away. Then the rapid extension of the iron trade, with its furnaces and forges, has brought together vast numbers of men under circumstances in which, without much Christian care on the part of God's people, they sink into gross vice and ignorance. The evidence given before the commission which sat in Sheffield during the summer of 1867 startled the entire nation, if not the entire civilized world. It was well, therefore, that in 1847 a Wesleyan Methodist chapel was opened in Masborough, wherein the pure word of God is continually proclaimed. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." It was also well, that sixteen years after that chapel was thus opened, it should have been enlarged, an organ introduced, and other improvements made *that the friends should be willing to strain every*

in order that all pecuniary obstacles to further progress should be removed. "To their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves." Miss D. having but recently settled in Masborough, and but attempting to establish a school there, might have found plausible excuses why she should not do much in such a formidable undertaking. But she loved the gracious Master, and therefore did what she could.

When Miss D. had been in Masborough somewhat more than a year another form of usefulness was suggested to her mind. She had gained great influence over the children attending her school, and was exceedingly desirous to employ that influence for the noblest purposes. A scheme presented itself by which it might be possible to promote the cause of the Redeemer in heathen lands; and, at the same time, be training the dear girls for future usefulness. The mission cause was very dear to the heart of Miss D., and was already becoming so to some of the children. Might it not be brought still nearer to their affections? The children were regarded as too young to be admitted to the Missionary Sewing Meeting at Rotherham, and were engaged in school when that was held. Could they not have one of their own? But might not the girls, being so young, be made, by some means to take a livelier interest in the work, than they were likely to do if the garments they made were either sold for the benefit of the Mission fund, or sent to the Mission house without any special destination? Would it not bring the matter more closely to their *imaginations* and sympathy, if the girls knew some-

thing concerning the very place to which their handiwork was sent?

In the Missionary Report for 1864, the friends of the Wesleyan Missionary cause were informed: "In the Barbadoes First Circuit, the year has been unprecedented in commercial depression. Want of food and raiment, and of the means to make the usual contributions, combined, in many instances, with sickness, has prevented numbers from attending the means of grace. The result has been declension in spiritual things, loss in numbers, and falling off in finances. The schools have suffered in common with other parts of our charge. The attendance at some of them has greatly diminished. Want of food, want of clothes, and inability to pay the fees are the causes assigned by the parents for keeping their children at home. In the Barbadoes Second Circuit the year has been one of trial and embarrassment. Drought, blighted crops, and famine, have very seriously affected public services, schools, and finances, at all the Stations. At Ebenezer, during the latter half of the year, the Sabbath morning congregations have been much diminished, and the classes very thinly attended; the reason generally assigned being that the people could neither pay their class money nor provide themselves with suitable clothing. The new sanctuary at Providence, Reece Chapel, has been reared in troublous times, and stands a graceful memorial of the Christian liberality of one whose benefactions and love of Methodism will be likely to confer inestimable benefit upon generations yet unborn."

The details of the terrible sufferings endured at *that time* by the coloured population of Barbadoes

were harrowing in the extreme. Could half a score little girls in South Yorkshire, directed and assisted by their teacher, do anything to relieve a few of those sufferers? If they succeeded, some little children might get to school, and hear of Jesus and heaven, who otherwise must grow up in ignorance. Perhaps, in the print dress which they made, some godly woman might go to chapel, when otherwise a regard to decency would prevent her doing so. In the sanctuary that suffering disciple would be reminded of the rest which remaineth for the people of God. Having listened to the divine declaration, "And there shall be no more pain," she would be better prepared to struggle on through the wilderness which had proved to her so rough and thorny. A little relief, to a few troubled ones, might be sent by them across the broad waters, if they were very diligent, and self-denying, and persevering. This was worth trying for. The girls felt as though the distress in Barbadoes was real, and brought very near to them. Nobly did they work during the hours allotted, once a week, to this labour of love. Cheerfully did they give of their pence to assist in the accomplishment of the purpose in which they became more and more interested.

At length a box of clothing was despatched to the Mission house at London, consigned to the care of the Rev. Henry Hurd at Barbadoes, for distribution among his needy flock. Nothing disastrous occurred to the train which conveyed the important box to London, and the packet by which it was taken to the West Indies arrived at its destination. Very speedily a letter, a very long letter, a letter full of interesting *information and grateful love*, arrived at Masborough

from the Missionary's wife. The sight of that letter, and the character of its contents, were enough to make any little fingers work hard. Did they not renew their efforts?

“Stitch, stitch, stitch.”

Thimble, needle, and thread, were again employed most assiduously. That letter from Mrs. Hurd could be seen and read at any time. A missionary's wife had thought their gift of sufficient importance to require such an acknowledgment. Clothing must indeed be needed by the poor black folk, if such as they had made and sent was so prized. The children felt that they were working for real sufferers, little children and their parents, and they gave themselves to the task with corresponding eagerness. There can be no doubt that several of these dear girls will in consequence, throughout life, have a somewhat more lively impression of the reality and importance of the mission work, and of the sweetness of the joy arising from engaging in that work with loving hearts. There are those who will never forget how so long as their teacher and friend could possibly meet them for this purpose she did so; nor can the recollection of the holy delight which they experienced whilst thus working for Christ, and the souls purchased by his blood, be ever obliterated from their memories.

Miss Denham was, however, as deeply interested in the case of the heathen at home. Indeed those nearest to her seemed to claim the largest amount of her sympathy and effort. The attempt which has lately been made, by means of public meetings, to

bring into greater prominence the Home Missionary character of Methodism, found a ready and hearty response in her bosom. She had no great store of wealth from which to bring forth to assist in this undertaking, but, as in every department of Christian service which was open to her, she did what she could. When health had begun to fail, and there was the uncertainty concerning her temporal prospects which feebleness generally imposes, she sent, by the minister resident near to her home, half a sovereign to the Home Missionary meeting. The meeting was not to be held in the chapel she attended. There had never been one held in Masborough. The subject was not brought with any special distinctness before her notice. She could not herself be present at Rotherham. Few comparatively of the congregation at Masborough seemed to take any notice of the announcement concerning a meeting to be held in the circuit town. They failed to realize that it was a circuit meeting. No human being called the attention of Sophia Denham to the subject. None expected any donation from her. But the Holy Spirit had caused her soul to yearn in tenderest pity over the myriads in our country perishing for lack of knowledge. She yielded to the promptings of the Holy Ghost: she knew how the Lord Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." And she doubtless gained the approval of her "Father who seeth in secret."

Within a bow-shot of her own residence there were scores of baptized heathen. For these she felt more deeply than for the perishing ones in St. Giles and *Chequer Alley*, or for those in Barbadoes and Fiji.

With these there might be personal intercourse. The wretchedness, and ignorance, and wickedness of these must in part be seen. Past their dwellings she must, at times, walk; and into those dwellings she might, by Christian courtesy, gain access. From this, so long as life and strength were spared, she did not shrink. There was much that was repulsive. Many of the people were rude and craving. Their dwellings and habits were filthy. The poverty which was, in many cases, extreme, often resulted from indolence, extravagance, or intemperance. Certainly the task of tract distribution among such people is not an attractive one; and if the distributor is striving to secure personal intercourse with the residents in those miserable dwellings in order to advise and help, he will need much wisdom, and self-denial, and divine charity.

Miss Sophia was, however, endeavouring to tread in the steps of her Master, who "went about doing good." She patiently toiled on in her appointed task. There were none to applaud. Not unfrequently there was much to discourage. Occasionally some were offended at her counsel, however kindly given. At other times some would appear to be yielding to her good advice, but only assuming the appearance from selfish and worldly motives. She was often startled by manifestations of ignorance more complete and dreadful than we should expect to discover in England. From entries made in her journals there can be no doubt that she knew much of what it is to "go forth bearing precious seed and weeping." But the Lord had evidently assigned this as the place where she should toil for him. It was an honour to cast in *the seed* anywhere for him. She might in Mas-

borough do good, and secure the smile of him whom she loved. The glorious and endless reward would not be wanting in the great day. She therefore, with a loving and trustful heart, proceeded in the accomplishment of her task. "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

CHAPTER XI.

LEARNING TO WAIT.

“What thou shalt to-day provide,
Let me as a child receive ;
What to-morrow may betide,
Calmly to thy wisdom leave.
’Tis enough that thou wilt care :
Why should I the burden bear ?

As a little child relies
On a care beyond his own,
Knows he’s neither strong nor wise ;
Fears to stir a step alone ;
Let me thus with thee abide,
As my Father, guard, and guide.”

EARLY in the year 1865 Miss Denham’s health was manifestly impaired. Those two years spent in Masborough had been marked by incessant application. Her zeal had constantly prompted her to discover some mode of doing good, and then to engage therein with all her strength. But, day by day, the duties of a teacher had to be attended to. Most of her friends had been convinced that she was not allowing herself sufficient time for relaxation. Perhaps, at times, she herself doubted whether or not she was acting with sufficient regard for her own health. She had only just completed her twentieth year, yet had done much

of Christian service in addition to a conscientious discharge of the ordinary duties of her station.

When a good man was lamenting the early decease of the Rev. John Smith (the J. Smith born at Cudworth) a friend of his suggested what was intended to console, and at the same time to explain what seemed mysterious in the unexpected removal of so ardent a servant of Christ. Those conversing were familiar with agricultural pursuits, and with the arrangements concerning piece-work which are occasionally made among farmers and their labourers. Hence the character of the illustration employed. "It will not do for us to be finding fault because Mr. S. has been taken to heaven before he became an old man. He was like a man working in the fields, but more in earnest than his fellows. He did a good day's work. He had full measure allotted to him, and he did not leave it to be done by you or me. But he just got it done by noon, and went home! He is now at rest, and enjoying himself. But a fair day's work was done: far more than most who live to be old accomplish in the longer space. Now if the task be done, and the labourer be in a state of happy repose, and the Master be well-pleased, you and I have no reason for complaint or wonder."

There is, however, much to excite regret and awaken thought, when those who appear to be most likely for usefulness are removed to another world, or are laid aside from active pursuits in this. In Miss Denham's case, during the spring of 1865, and as summer advanced, it was clear that she could no longer employ the energy she had previously manifested. Her feebleness might be the natural result of

over tasking herself, though with generous and noble purpose. This super-abundant zeal might now be regarded by some as an occasion of regret. All who knew her, and felt an interest in the advancement of the Redeemer's cause in Masborough, were constrained to hope that a partial cessation from her toil might be the means of restoring her to health and usefulness. But thus much was clear that she must be content, at least for the present, to do far less than she had been accustomed to do, and far less than her ardent temperament would incline her to do. Many lessons had been taught to her listening heart since, in the days of childhood, she placed herself at the feet of Jesus; and she was now to learn that exceedingly difficult lesson, *to wait*. On many an errand, more than we can reckon, she had hastened with loving and cheerful alacrity, but now she was, by the indications of Providence, unmistakeably directed to sit still. At any rate for a time, and comparatively her life must be one of inactivity. No doubt, after a time, sooner or later, by other indications of his Providence, the Master would again speak. But, for a season, he was silent. That which she had made apparent was to be reverently pondered and fully learned. The ardent disciple, noted for her much doing, was to sit still and wait. During this period we have reason to know that, as in many similar cases, various questions of solemn purport, successively occupied her thoughts. One by one, as her soul was prepared and strengthened, the waiting one discerned the momentous and searching queries.

Why am I thus enfeebled? As yet there was no sufficient ground to fear concerning her ultimate recovery.

It would have seemed foolishly timorous to do so. With a little more help than she had been accustomed to, her school duties were accomplished. In some of the tasks of loving service to which she had hitherto devoted her leisure hours she was still enabled to engage. But still she knew that, at least for a time, all her pursuits must be attended to with caution. Self-restraint was constantly needed. Some of her engagements had to be relinquished altogether. Others must be fulfilled with a caution which was irksome and embarrassing. Nothing could be done with the energy which once she delighted to put forth. There was a danger lest her ardour, thus checked, should degenerate into impatience. At any rate, there was the question which still presented itself even when the prayer for resignation was on the lips, or the grace of resignation was actually in the heart. Why am I thus enfeebled?

All around were persons who were employing an amount of vigour, which seemed almost unlimited and inexhaustible, in the service of Satan. They were gratifying "the lusts of the flesh, and the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life," without any check from pain and languor. Those forge-men, and rollers, and strikers, and furnace-men, and other artisans who passed along the street, as she feebly crept to and from school, were possessed, for the most part, of great physical vigour. Too clearly was it manifested that many of them used their strength, in hours of leisure, to no good purpose. The beer-houses and dram-shops of the neighbourhood were largely frequented. The trains, especially those to and from *Sheffield*, were crowded with pleasure-seekers on the

Lord's day. Hundreds from Masborough, and the vicinity, found their way to the race course at Doncaster, and to the steeple-chase at Rotherham, whenever the gathering of the earthly minded occurred in these places. Some of these muscular men were noted as confirmed and desperate poachers. Iniquity in every form could find those in its pursuit whose health appeared unbroken and whose vigour seemed immeasurable. These were employing the heaven-bestowed gift in the service of the foe, yet it was not withdrawn. Miss Denham, like many other godly sufferers, was conscious that her purpose was to employ every gift according to the will of the Divine benefactor, yet had to deplore its partial removal. Indeed her chief reason for desiring health was that the glory of God might be promoted in the salvation of precious souls. Why then should health be denied to her? Why, in her twenty-first year, should she be compelled to move like an aged matron of three-score-and-ten? Why should she be compelled to put forth effort as the trickling of a feeble and intermitting rill, when she would have had it gush forth like an abundant stream, fertilizing all around? Why should the voice which she would gladly have employed in directing the perishing to the all-sufficient Saviour become so tremulous and low, whilst, all around, voices employed in blasphemy or rage were so loud and firm? Why should the hand which had been so frequently engaged in recording the goodness of her God, and commending his grace to others, have almost lost its cunning, whilst many hands were strong to accomplish deeds of cruelty and injustice? Why should she, whose *soul-longing was to lead others, especially the youthful and*

inexperienced, into the way of peace, and then along that heavenward path, feel that her little store of strength had, at any rate for the present, been well nigh exhausted; whilst those who were, by allurements, or ridicule, or intimidation; from motives of selfishness, or to increase the number of persons like themselves, or from mere caprice, inducing others to tread the polluted and perilous ways of transgression, felt no weariness in their evil work?

Miss Denham had to learn resignation to God amid affliction; and the submission of the human judgment to the Divine amid circumstances perplexing in themselves, and only partially explained by the Great Disposer of all. The lesson was learned. The Holy Spirit taught it to this loving disciple. There was so much that was painfully enigmatical in her position at this time that she could enter into the views and feelings of the Psalmist when he said: "But as for me my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.—Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." But she was graciously preserved from the full power of this frequent temptation. For the most part she could rest, where the Psalmist arrived when he had held intercourse with his God in the sanctuary. All this is perplexing. Much remains but partially explained even by the bible. But all must be right, because overruled by a Being of infinite wisdom and love. "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.—

Nevertheless I am continually with thee : thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

How will this sickness terminate? Here was a second question which presented itself as months passed away without any improvement in the health of the sufferer. During the year 1865 a restoration to health was anticipated, both by the invalid and those who were acquainted with her. During the bleak and cold weeks at the commencement of the year it was hoped that so soon as spring arrived, and out-door exercise could be more freely employed, Miss D. would gain relief and strength. Then the capricious weather of March and April was blamed as retarding her advancement to health. How could progress be made when piercing winds and bright sunshine succeeded each other so suddenly, or were blended together? Certainly not until that season, so perilous to the delicate, was past, could we hope for any permanent improvement. We had been foolishly sanguine to speak of it, or expect it. Then in early summer a little complete relaxation from school duties was to do much. The frequent visit to the school-room, though only for a brief period, prevented any augmentation of vigour. The little that was gained by rest was all spent as it was obtained. A short interval of complete rest would no doubt effect much, especially if the time was spent at some distance from the school and from the scenes of former sacred toil. The call to wor

would not be so distinctly heard and therefore would not disturb so greatly. When the sufferer on her return discovered that she was as speedily wearied as before, the hope was transferred to the long vacation. Too much had been expected from a week or two. The vacation, though prolonged somewhat beyond its usual duration, wrought no change which was permanently favourable. We then fancied that the heat of summer was the occasion of that terrible languor which was so distressing to the sufferer. The autumnal air, not so cold as that of winter, not so oppressively hot as that of summer, and more equalized than that of spring would do wonders for the sufferer. Thus passed away, in the maintenance of hope and the employment of all suitable means for her recovery, and constant supplication to the all-wise and all-gracious Disposer of events, the year 1865. Both the invalid, and the friends who so greatly prized her, were still busy with the questions, Why this sickness? Why is strength withdrawn for so long a period? Why is one so earnestly desirous to work for God and souls prevented from so doing? During that year they were learning more and more perfectly to reply, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." But the second lesson was being gradually placed before them. With increasing distinctness it claimed their attention.

Is the deepening gloom around me occasioned by the passing of a cloud, or by the setting of the sun? To the inhabitants of this earth days of various length are allotted. To some the sun ascends to the very zenith. To others the sun, when apparently about to *disappear beneath* the western horizon, ascends again. *To others, the sun, after an exceedingly brief course,*

and when, seemingly, only dispelling the darkness and about soon to shine forth in strength, descends lower and lower, and speedily disappears from sight. We all know that, in like manner, our lives are of various length. But it cannot be easy for a young person surrounded by seniors, to realize that his or her own life is drawing to a close. It is natural for us to assume that the length of our earthly sojourn will resemble that which has been allotted to our associates. It seems unnatural that we should leave behind those who were so far advanced in life when we were born. Will not our day be prolonged like that of our friends? If it is manifest that a chilly gloom has long surrounded us; that instead of being dispelled it becomes deeper, may we not reasonably suppose that, after all, it is but a cloud, or succession of clouds, denser and larger, than others have passed under. When life's day has only commenced so recently, what heart would not be slow to perceive that the gloom is deepening because the sun is going down?

Towards the close of the year, however, the solemn question could not be set aside. Her Uncle and Aunt with whom she resided, and who regarded her as a daughter, had long painfully felt the force of that declaration: "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." They were not willing to admit to each other, nor to her, nor to their own hearts, the dread conviction which was demanding entrance, but they could not banish that conviction to any great distance. Sophia's father, who, on account of failing health, became a Supernumerary at the Conference of 1865, and had settled at no great distance from his daughter, was *constrained* to fear that he should not long be allowed

to retain the daughter whom he so greatly loved. The sufferer herself was convinced that she must deal with a question far beyond mere weakness, and pain, and a temporary cessation from the tasks she delighted in. How will this sickness terminate? It will have an end. But what will be its close? Shall I then return to my place in the school, and in some department of Christian work in the Church militant; or will it be consummated by my funeral and the entrance of my spirit into the unseen world? How will it end? This sickness may not be unto death. I fain hope that it may not. I would rather, though amid suffering and disappointment, try to accomplish something more for my blessed Master, and the precious souls for whom his blood was shed. But it is becoming increasingly probable that the disease will terminate fatally. My day of life seemed only to be opening, yet it is likely to finish speedily. The deepening gloom may be the result of passing clouds, but, more likely, it is occasioned by the going down of the sun. How will this end? As the year closed the reply to this question became more and more distinct. It became apparent that the end could not be very distant. Gently, and without terror, but forcefully did the message find entrance to her listening, patient, and confiding heart. "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Then a third question of solemn import was presented to that thoughtful sufferer.

How shall I meet God? She had been learning to wait. She had been sitting still, when she would gladly have been moving swiftly in the service of God, and on errands of mercy. She had pondered that question, "Why am I thus enfeebled"? until her

whole soul could say, in the exercise of complete resignation, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." If it be the will of my gracious Lord that I should continue in this state of constrained inactivity, and frequent pain, it must be right, for he doeth all things well. She had considered that next question, "How will this sickness terminate"? until there remained little uncertainty concerning the reply. She heard the solemn message: "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Thus had she been waiting, and learning to wait, as the servants of Christ ought to do when so directed by their Lord. But the most thrilling question of all was now presented with startling distinctness, "How shall I appear with acceptance in the presence of my Lord? It is not likely that I shall ever again be allowed to engage with vigour in the tasks of earth; I must speedily enter the unseen world, and stand amid the light streaming from the throne of God, how shall I secure the approbation of the righteous Jehovah? "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Can I abide the searching ordeal through which I must speedily pass?"

There is reason to believe that Miss Denham spent much time at this period in self examination and earnest communion with God. She could no longer give lessons in the day-school. She could no longer distribute tracts. She could no longer meet the dear children for Christian communion. She could not bear to converse with friends, however dear, for any lengthened period. The sacred scriptures, which had been her delight, could only be read at intervals. Even intercourse with those ministering to her wants had to be limited. But the throne of grace was still accessi-

ble. There, that most solemn of all questions, and solemn indeed it must be to those who feel that speedily they must pass behind the veil, may be fully considered without distress or terror. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

The mere approbation of godly friends must be felt to be insufficient in a dying hour. Pleasant it is during life to have the confidence and approval of good men. We may well be thankful if, by the grace of God, our tempers and words, and conduct have been such that those acquainted with the things of God are pleased therewith. It is something to be enabled so to live that our membership with the Church militant is retained; and that from time to time the tokens of our union with that Church are renewed, our lives being thus declared to be such that we may safely be acknowledged to belong to Christ's fold. It is more when, not only the token is given, but the hearty, and unhesitating, and general approval of God's people is bestowed. For the godly people with whom we are associated to regard our union with them to be a source of pleasure, and advantage, and credit, is an occasion of devout gratitude. But all this must be seen to be insufficient, when the closing hour draws nigh. When a professor of religion has reason to know that the end is at hand the confidence and approbation of his fellow professors must appear as very light. He will soon be far beyond the sound of their voices. When they are conveying his remains to the grave, the lamentation they may make over him, however sincere *and sorrowful*, and however devout the mourners who

thus express their regret, will avail nothing for the soul of the departed. Every thing will then depend on the approbation of the Most High. "Wherefore we labour that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him."

No comparison of ourselves with others will afford sufficient comfort in a dying hour. We may have been as honest and truthful in our dealings with our fellows as many others. We may have been as regular in our attendance at the means of grace as professors of religion generally are. We may have kept as strict a watch over our tempers and talk as most religious people do. We may have kept as far from the crooked way of sin, and avoided the appearance of evil, to an extent quite satisfactory to our friends. We may have manifested a zeal for the glory of God, and the welfare of our fellow believers, and the godly training of the youthful, and the salvation of sinners, which will bear comparison with the zeal of most. We may have sometimes felt a degree of satisfaction, if not complacency, while measuring ourselves by those standards furnished by the conduct of professors in general. But all this will not avail. The dying are passing away from all these standards. They are about to enter a world where these will be unemployed. God's will, as revealed to them in his Holy Word, and enforced on their attention by his gracious Spirit, will be the only standard. The question will not be, "Was the worthless metal, in our case, as skilfully and carefully concealed, as in the case of others?" But, "Did we seek and find the precious metal, the fine gold of the kingdom?" Concerning each guest it will be asked, "*Has he on the wedding garment?*" not, "*Did*

demean himself with outward decorum equal to that of those seated around him. "Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

How shall I meet God? Shall I be approved when asking admission among the holy angels and the spirits of just men made perfect? Will the blessed Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant," when the voices of my present kind companions are no longer heard? Will my religion be found to be without any essential defect when I stand amid the blaze of light proceeding from the throne, and beneath the immediate scrutiny of that God from whom nothing can be concealed, and to whom no evil thing can be made acceptable.

It seemed as though on those matters there was, at this season, much earnest thought on the part of the dear sufferer. Much time was spent in communing with her own heart, and with her God. It was a period of solemn waiting, for the final summons might arrive any hour. Yet all was well. Her frame of mind was deeply serious, yet exceedingly happy. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." "Now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. I am in a strait *betwixt two*, having a desire to depart, and to be with *Christ; which is far better.*" &c.

CHAPTER XII.

HOME! SWEET HOME!

“ Blessed fold, no foe can enter
And no friend departeth thence.
Jesus is their sun, their centre,
And their shield, Omnipotence.
Blessed, for the Lamb shall feed them
All their tears shall wipe away,
To the living fountains lead them,
Till fruition's perfect day.”

IN the commencement of 1866 it was evident that the suffering pilgrim had nearly reached her heavenly home. There were times indeed when those who loved her most were led for a brief season to cherish a hope that she would be spared to them. This had been especially the case in the summer of the previous year. Upon her return to Masborough, after a short stay at Matlock, where she had been apparently at the very gates of the grave, she so far recovered strength as to resume a portion of her duties in the school, and venture occasionally to the class meeting. But the thought of her complete restoration was only as a transient gleam of sunshine amid the deepening shadows of evening. Sophia, for the most part, longed to be at home. Occasionally she seemed afraid lest she should be induced, by the severity of her sufferings, to desire an *immediate* removal with too much earnestness.

She now never seemed to expect her restoration to health. If she ever wished it, the reason was that she might be more faithful, and of greater service than she had ever been.

Soon after the new year opened she was visiting a friend at Retford to whom she was much attached, (Miss S. A. Cobb). The two had been conversing some little time, whilst the invalid lay on the sofa, unable to sit up. At length Sophia said: "Dearest, let us pray together, I feel as though it will be the last time on earth." As they had talked, and as they afterwards prayed, it seemed to Miss Cobb as though a special influence from on high rested on them. Indeed she said concerning the sufferer "It appeared as though she was already at the gates of the heavenly city, as she earnestly pleaded with God for strength of soul to finish well "the race" which had been set before her, and which was so nearly accomplished. During that evening she expressed an unshaken and delightful assurance of God's mercy to her soul. But she added, somewhat mournfully: "I regret that I have done so little for Jesus. If I ever have a wish to be raised up again, it is that I may work for the blessed Saviour. But it will be sweet indeed to be at home: For ever with the Lord."

The mind of the sufferer was now for the most part kept in peace. The Lord, in great mercy, rebuked the cruel adversary. During the early part of her illness she had generally enjoyed tranquillity of soul; but the blessing was gained by earnest, and, at times, painful conflict. For instance, on one occasion whilst *at Scarbro'* for the benefit of her health she was unable *to go to the chapel with her friends.* On their return *they found Sophia* in considerable excitement and dis-

treass. She threw her arms around her aunt's neck and exclaimed: "Oh, aunt, I have had such a terrible conflict with the enemy of my soul. I know that I am the Lord's. But I feel unutterably depressed. I know not how to account for it. Satan has been sorely harassing me. Will you pray with me, aunt?" They bowed together at the throne of grace. The promise was speedily fulfilled: "The God of peace shall bruise Satan beneath your feet shortly." As they prayed the darkness was removed, and Sophia was enabled to rejoice in God her Saviour. Then, as her aunt told her what she could remember of the sermon to which she had been listening, which had been concerning "the glory which shall be revealed." Sophia's heart was gladdened, and her face was radiant with holy delight and hope. Throughout the earlier stages of her illness there was much of this alternation of feeling. She was not tempted above that she was able to bear. The way of escape was always provided for her, and of that she eagerly availed herself. But she was tempted; and, at times, sorely. When, however, her bodily strength was diminished, and the feeble frame could not readily have sustained those exercises, her mind became more tranquil.

During a few days spent at Matlock, in the house of some Christian people, whose uniform kindness and attention to the wants of the dear invalid were remembered by her with grateful love, she on one occasion expressed an earnest wish to attend the morning service in the little chapel at Matlock Bridge. The walk being beyond her strength, her kind hostess, Mrs. Brown, procured a wheel-chair and thus obtained *for her once more the gratification of hearing God's word preached in the sanctuary.* Her sister, who had

accompanied her as well as her father, can never forget her affecting appearance as she sat in a corner of the pew. She was evidently unequal to the task of supporting herself. Her form and features were wasted by disease. Yet the light of heaven was resting upon her. The words of comfort from the book-divine were precious to her soul. The invalid was drinking of the water of life. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever, for all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." The abounding comfort enjoyed by the dear invalid during the service evidently rose to holy triumph as the words were sung.

"Now I have found the ground wherein
 Sure my soul's anchor may remain ;
 The wounds of Jesus, for my sin
 Before the world's foundation slain ;
 Whose mercy shall unshaken stay,
 When heaven and earth are fled away.

"Though waves and storms go o'er my head,
 Though strength, and health, and friends be gone,
 Though joys be withered all and dead,
 Though every comfort be withdrawn,
 On this my stedfast soul relies ;
 Father, thy mercy never dies.

"Fix'd on this ground will I remain,
 Though my heart fail, and flesh decay ;
 This anchor shall my soul sustain
 When earth's foundations melt away,
 Mercy's full power I then shall prove,
 Loved with an everlasting love."

Perhaps no one in the chapel on that occasion, not even the minister who was expounding God's word, felt the power of that truth so fully as the invalid, pale and languid, who could scarcely sustain herself in the pew, that she might listen to the precious teachings of holy scripture. Perhaps none could more firmly, and with more quiet, calm triumph, adopt the language of the hymn as it was sung by the congregation, than she who was too feeble to join with vigour in that service of song.

The Lord Jesus, after feeding several thousands, by his gracious and marvellous power multiplying the available food, said to his disciples: "Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost." The dear sufferer, whose closing scenes we are now tracing was *striving* to employ the remnants of her strength and opportunity for her Lord and the souls redeemed by him. The odoriferous ointment of her faith, and love, and zeal, had been gratefully brought to him; and, to the last drop it must be his. Sophia could not perform tasks similar to those the doing of which had been a holy delight. But she could still do a little, and that little was done; and, doubtless, was acceptable in the estimation of the gracious Master. It was still as a sweet-smelling-savour. There was the perfume of loving gratitude.

A workman was needed to do some repairs at her uncle's house where she was residing. The invalid could speak a few words to him concerning the importance of laying up treasure in heaven. The tones were very feeble. Perhaps they were the more likely to find entrance into the heart of him to whom they were addressed. A man in her uncle's employ was

sometimes directed to drive her out, when her brother and her uncle were too busy. Not unfrequently Sophia needed all her strength to hold herself up during the drive. A few words about the Saviour who was then so unutterably precious to her, whose arm she was leaning upon in her utter feebleness, might be uttered, and they were uttered. There is reason to think they were not spoken in vain. Efforts were being made to erect a new chapel and school room at Park-gate, near Rotherham. Miss Denham could no longer throw herself fully into such efforts. The three years which had elapsed since she was ardently engaged in assisting for the Masborough bazaar had witnessed a sad change in her health. Her right hand seemed to be rapidly forgetting its cunning. But she might succeed in doing something if she tried. She made the effort. The little frock was finished. That was to be the last piece of needlework wrought by her fingers. Very appropriate was it, that it should be presented to the Lord's service.

One of her friends had, in her estimation, been especially kind to her father. Sophia wished to manifest the gratitude she felt on this account. She commenced a small group of wax flowers to present to this friend as a memento of her thankful esteem. But her trembling fingers could not accomplish the task. The flowers were laid aside that she might rest awhile, and then resume her effort. But it was in vain. Workmanship of that sort was no longer permitted to her. The latest completed work of her fingers was laid on the altar of her God. The unfinished attempt *testified* to her grateful appreciation of kindness, especially when manifested to her father so dearly loved

by her. No doubt that incomplete group of flowers is prized.

Sophia's chief task now was to obtain grace from God, to glorify him amid extreme debility and severe suffering. The strength needed was supplied. In various ways was it imparted day by day. There is sufficient reason for believing that it was chiefly given to the sufferer when she was holding communion with her Heavenly Father, who seeth in secret, and openly rewardeth those who draw nigh to him. But other means of grace were afforded to her. The converse which was held with her, and in her presence when she was too feeble to speak, was chiefly on spiritual and heavenly subjects. Often during such intercourse the hearts of all present burned within them, because the Master was in their midst, opening unto them the scriptures, and imparting his peace to their souls. At other times good books, as read to her, or as read by herself so far as her feebleness allowed, were made a great comfort to her. "Doing and suffering" and "Help Heavenward," were among the latest thus helpful to her. Sophia's surviving friends testify how much she prized the aids afforded; how she welcomed those who would encourage her in the heavenly way, by suitable conversation, reading, or prayer. When strength permitted, her leader and her Christian friends were always hailed with pleasure. Her sister adds: "Especially the visits of her minister were a great comfort to her. They were always seasons of spiritual refreshment. Because of her exceeding debility he talked but little to her. But, when he had taken leave, she would frequently remark: 'His prayers do me much good.'"

Good Friday was spent with her parents, then resident at Woodhouse, near Sheffield. She was unable to attend the public services. But in the evening she was so far strengthened as to receive the Lord's supper, when administered by her father. The season was, of course, felt to be one of special solemnity, and God made it a season of special blessing. Sophia had a strong presentiment that it would prove the *last* occasion on which they would receive it together; and her debility and emaciated appearance compelled those who loved her to fear that her impression was correct.

Afterwards her mamma spoke of the desirableness of departing hence, that we may be "with the Lord." Sophia assented, but added, "Is there not a danger of being influenced too much by a mere desire to escape suffering?" Thus jealous was she of herself and unwilling in any degree to impose on herself. She would not regard a mere weariness of the world, because the path was very rough and thorny; as heavenly mindedness. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."

About this time a few verses were employed greatly to cheer and encourage her amid the deepening gloom of outward circumstances:

"There are times when faith is waning,
And life's discipline is sore,
When my spirit sinks in weakness,
Help me, Lord, to trust Thee more.

" When life's sorrows hard are pressing,
 Almost more than I can bear ;
 May I have sweet views of Jesus
 Of his sympathy and care.

" When my frame is worn with suffering,
 Lord, I ask thy love the while ;
 I can bear all thy correction,
 If I may but see thy smile.

" There are times when I can trust Thee,
 Feel so sweetly thou art mine ;
 Faith dispels the clouds which gather,
 And reveals thyself divine.

" But, alas, my joy so varies
 And I scarcely seem to love ;
 Still I look through tears—temptations,
 To the God who dwells above.

" Lord, I would that I could ever
 Feel the same to Thee each day ;
 Keep me steadfast—draw me nearer,
 Walking in thy happy way.

" Ah, no words can tell the sweetness,
 As I look and gaze on Thee ;
 Perfect in thy mighty fulness,
 Changeless is thy love to me."

Ten days were spent, in much suffering yet in peaceful resignation, at her father's home. It was then thought advisable that she should return to Masborough. Though the sufferer and her friends knew it not, there remained but ten days more, and she would be called to the home above, there to behold her glorified Lord, and for ever to be seated at his feet. These days were, in the arrangements of Divine Providence, to be spent in the dwelling of her *loved uncle and aunt*. From them she had received

countless acts of affectionate sympathy; in their dwelling she had long had a home, and to them she had been as a daughter. With them she was to spend her latest hours, and from their house she was to depart to the city of God.

Her uncle was about to remove to a more commodious residence, and one which was more pleasantly situated than that which he had for some time occupied. When the change was first contemplated, Sophia's restoration was hoped for, and it was thought that the change might conduce to that desired end. Now there was a melancholy pleasure in the thought that she might have somewhat of increased comfort during that brief extension of life which was all that could be reasonably expected.

Sophia's chief solicitude was respecting the health of her aunt. She feared that the exertion connected with removal would injure her. The invalid could do nothing. She had that lesson to learn, a very painful one to her, to witness incessant activity, and, so far from taking a part therein, to feel that her needs added to the ceaseless demand for thought and effort. She could only repay the kindness manifested towards her by sympathy with her friends in their toil, and by the sweet smile of gratitude and affection which will never be forgotten by her aunt, and sister, and other members of the family.

The physical prostration and distress of the invalid increased. At times those who most prized her companionship could not but wish, for the sake of the sufferer, that the Lord would release her. The nights *especially* were seasons of pain, often amounting to *agony*. The night of Tuesday, April 17, was of this

character. On the Wednesday morning when her uncle entered her room, and tenderly inquired what sort of a night she had passed, the reply was, "So distressing, uncle, I did not think that I could live through it."

During that Wednesday forenoon, however, she was dressed, and then lay down on the bed. She felt that the end could not be far distant, and calmly proceeded to finish the little arrangements she desired to make previous to her departure. Letters, some of which had been received by her when she had the prospect of a lengthened sojourn on earth, were assorted. Other tasks of similar kind were attended to. There was, within the soul of the invalid, neither terror nor regret at the anticipation of a speedy entrance into the unseen world. But there was the full conviction that all which she had to do here must be done very quickly; and, to prevent inconvenience or perplexity to those remaining, she was wishful to accomplish those tasks. The summons for which she was now hourly waiting was not regarded as a dreadful one. The messenger would but conduct her to the presence of her heavenly Father, and to his happy home. Besides, those who were specially dear to her had been led into the path leading to that home; and, though their pilgrimage might be somewhat prolonged, there was no painful doubt concerning their final safety. One much-loved one, whose memory had ever been revered, her sainted mother, was already in heaven; and would, doubtless, gladly welcome the daughter she had, a few years before, left behind. The glorified mother would be glad that one loved child had finished *the course allotted to her.* Then Sophia's father, and

sister, and brother, and uncle, and aunt, and many more whom she had dearly loved, were pressing onward towards the good land. So the sufferer could regard her approaching departure with peaceful heart ; and, on that Wednesday forenoon calmly engaged herself, as strength permitted, in doing what might prove helpful to the friends she was leaving.

During the afternoon of the same day she was gently conveyed to the new house. Her friends, however sorrowfully, were compelled to admit the conviction that the hopes cherished concerning Sophia when the removal was first determined on, had faded away. Her stay with them could only be short, unless God in some extraordinary manner interposed. They did not, however, apprehend how short would be the time during which their invalid would occupy the apartments so carefully prepared for her use. Even those who had most anxiously marked the indications of failing strength would have been startled had they been told, as they conveyed her to her new home, that in considerably less than twenty-four hours, she would be a resident in the heavenly city. Such, however, was the decree of the God she served.

On her arrival at the new house she was able to survey the various arrangements which had been made. She was much interested in them, and greatly pleased with whatever would conduce to the comfort of the family. Whatever had reference to her own personal comfort called forth expressions of loving gratitude, either by whispered words or smiling looks. The closing hours of that afternoon were very pleasant, and the recollection thereof is very precious to survivors. Happy are those who when separated

from dear friends by the cold stream of death, have such seasons of tender affection to look back upon. It is well that, under such circumstances, they can recall how often there were mutual endeavours to promote each other's happiness; and mutual thankfulness because of such kindness. It would be profitable if, in reference to our most intimate relationships, we sometimes strove to realize how our words, and tones, and looks, and actions, will appear to us, if sometime reviewed by ourselves when those chiefly affected thereby have crossed the river and we are left for a short time on this side.

During the evening the invalid was taken worse, was supported to her chamber, and laid on the bed from which she was never more to rise. She then felt somewhat easier and fell into a short slumber. In a little time, however, she was aroused by severe pain, and it was evident that the symptoms were becoming increasingly unfavourable. Her sister supported her in bed with her arm for some time. The sufferer perceived that her sister was fatigued, or thought that she perceived it, and, therefore requested that the pillows might be so arranged that "dear Polly" might no longer be over-tasked. It was judged needful to send a telegram for the doctor, and also to summon Mr. Denham to his daughter's bed-side. The medical man on his arrival saw at once that the end was nigh. The sufferer was completely worn out. On being questioned by the anxious friends, in an adjoining room, what was his opinion of the case, he frankly stated her stay with them was only a question of hours. She *might* possibly linger until morning. When the sister re-entered the room where the dear invalid was laid,

Sophia at once inquired what the doctor had said concerning her. The sister's heart was sorely troubled, and she knew not how to break the intelligence that they must so speedily part. She endeavoured for a time to evade the question, at least in part. Sophia, however, with much gentleness and calmness, and with excessive feebleness, but with persistent firmness, repeated the inquiry, until she succeeded in eliciting the doctor's opinion. As soon as this had been done the sister was startled by the fervency and earnestness with which the dying saint uttered the words, "Praise God!" A burden seemed to be removed at that moment from her mind. She had said before how she longed to depart and be with Christ, but she had been much afraid of manifesting impatience. She did not wish to desire unduly a relief from her sufferings, though at times they were extremely distressing. But now she had reason to believe that it was the will of her Lord that she should be relieved, and her soul greatly rejoiced. It must be right to be glad to go when the voice of her Master summoned her; and she now had cause to think that the voice of her Lord was calling her. It was, therefore, lawful to exult, and she did thus exult. To those whose hearts were weighed down with sorrow at the prospect of losing her, and who were endeavouring to suppress their tears, that burst of exultant joy was startling. It seemed to them strange that the announcement which had filled them with grief, should to her be the *occasion of joy*. To her it was the opening of the *gate she had long watched with earnest solicitude; the escape from the storm, and pain, and darkness which had, of late, become difficult to endure without mur-*

muring; the entrance to the city and banquet where everlasting light, and joy, and quiet are enjoyed by God's saints. The pent up feelings of many a month found partial utterance in that ejaculation: "Praise God!"

Slowly did that night pass away. Now and then she sunk into slumber for a few minutes. At times a sentence was feebly whispered to her sister, her papa, and others. The morning light began to enter the chamber, and the sufferer had not been received to the rest and bliss for which she longed, and which had seemed so near to her. The medical man might be mistaken, and nights of pain, and days of weariness, might still be appointed to her. Another hour, and the chamber was filled with the light of a spring morning. Sophia was earnestly and lovingly looking for her Lord. To depart, and to be with Christ, would be far better. She was heard to whisper gently, from time to time, "I wonder how long it will be." "I do not want to be impatient." She was listening for the much desired appearing of the Master.

About seven o'clock she asked for a drink, which was given to her. One of her pupils, Anne C. Smith, had, the day before, taken in some violets, as the invalid was known to be partial to flowers. These had been placed near to her bed. Her eye rested on them with evident pleasure. As she pointed to them, her sister reached them to her. She inhaled the perfume, and said, smilingly, "How sweet they are." These were her latest words. Her testimony to the faithfulness of her Lord, and the priceless worth of the *great salvation* had often been repeated, and was

finished. No further struggle remained. Her warfare was over. The victory had been achieved. The whispered summons, gentle indeed, had been sent. She heard, though others did not, the voice, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Her father, and sister, and brother, her uncle and aunt, with others watched to see the final conflict. They witnessed none! She had fallen asleep in Jesus. Her ransomed spirit had been taken to the holy city to be for ever with the Lord. She now remains, unceasingly and eternally, *at the feet of Jesus*. Thursday, April 19, 1866, will long be recollected by her kindred as the day when Sophia Denham entered into life; and not a few, whom she had assisted to reach the Saviour or to maintain their fidelity to him, will also long cherish a grateful recollection of their sainted friend.

To her immediate relatives it was a source of consolation to receive, from many persons, affectionate testimonies concerning the worth of the departed; and that, when, on the sixth of May, her death was improved in the Wesleyan chapel at Masborough, it was evident that she had secured general esteem. All this, however, is of comparatively little importance. What we have chief cause to rejoice in is, that, whilst she has gained the place she so greatly desired, there are those who, assisted by her counsel and example, are pressing after. They trust to rejoin the saintly one who has gone before; and, with her to spend the endless ages of their future life, *at the feet of Jesus*.





